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Media repolonization in Poland: from legislative concepts to the ownership transformation of Polska Press Group (2015–2021)

Abstract: In recent years, the Polish media system has faced significant changes, primarily related to the reform of public media and ownership transformations in the regional daily press sector. One of the key electoral promises of the Zjednoczona Prawica government (2015–2023) was the re-Polonization of the media. Despite the announcement of the re-Polonization/deconcentration act, it was never implemented. The only tangible result of years of discussions on its provisions was the acquisition of Polska Press Group assets by PKN Orlen Company from Verlagsgruppe Passau. This is a descriptive article aimed at presenting the chronology of events related to the re-Polonization of the Polish media in 2015–2021. The most important developments are categorized into two stages: conceptual and executive. The study draws on information and opinions from government and parliament members, as well as selected representatives of public institutions, which were published across media outlets with diversified profiles.

Key words: re-Polonization of the media, regional daily newspapers in Poland, Polska Press Group, PKN Orlen Company

Introduction

In the field of social communication and media sciences, media repolonization is a relatively new concept, even though foreign capital has been a significant presence in the Polish media market since 1989/1990, following the transformation of the media system. Discussions on media repolonization are highly politicized and polarized, with differing definitions and interpretations from proponents and opponents regarding the “Polishness” of media ownership and content. Supporters of media repolonization, including members of the United Right (ZP) government



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coalition (2015–2023) and conservative-right journalistic circles, tend to adopt a radical stance. They emphasize equality among media entities, often at the cost of limiting their freedom, viewing media as an arena for competing group interests. In this group, the concept of repolonization is sometimes used interchangeably with deconcentration and demopolization, though these terms have distinct assumptions. In contrast, opponents of repolonization – including members of opposition parties and liberal-left journalistic circles – emphasize the importance of media freedom over equality, underscoring its role in political communication as a check on power (Olechowska, 2023, p. 27).

The article is descriptive, aiming to chronologically present the events related to the repolonization of Polish media, which began in 2015 with the announcement of work on new legislation and concluded in 2021 with the transfer of PPG's assets (sold by the German media group VGP to the state-owned PKN Orlen). I categorize the key events of repolonization into two stages. The first stage, which I call the conceptual phase, was initiated by the change in executive power in Poland (October 2015, when the PO government was replaced by the ZP coalition) and concluded with the media announcement of PKN Orlen's acquisition of PPG assets in October 2020. I refer to the second stage as the executive phase, covering the period from the official announcement of PPG's ownership change (December 7, 2021) to the final dismissal by the OCC court of the RPO's appeal regarding a violation of the principle of pluralism (June 2022).

In describing the events, the research method of content analysis was used to determine the position of members of the government, parliament, and selected representatives of public institutions on repolonization. The research unit consisted of media messages containing the lexeme “repolonization of the media,” coming from profile-diverse media: general-information dailies: *Dziennik. Gazeta Prawna*, GW, ND, RP; weekly newspapers: *Do Rzeczy*, *NP*, *Sieci*; and websites: 1. General-information ones: *pap.pl*, *dzieje.pl*; 2. Economic ones: *bankier.pl*, *forsal.pl*, *money.pl*, *pb.pl*; 3. Industry-specific ones, dedicated to media and journalism: *press.pl*, *wirtualnemedial.pl*

1. Repolonization/deconcentration law: conceptual stage (October 2015–October 2020)

After the ZP government was sworn in during November 2015, the concept of media repolonization rarely appeared in statements from gov-

ernment members and coalition party representatives. At that time, the executive branch focused primarily on reforming public media. Piotr Gliński, the incoming Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Culture and National Heritage (MKiDN), explained what repolonization would entail: “In terms of the local press, we would like to change the ownership proportions” (PAP, 2015).

In February of the following year, when asked if repolonization would occur, Piotr Gliński stated: “Let’s expand the Polish media that are already there, and buy out those with foreign capital” (Nizinkiewicz, 2016). Three months later, Jarosław Kaczyński, chairman of the Law and Justice Party, remarked: “We should, step by step, of course, in accordance with the rules of civilized countries, that is, by buying up these media, make them Polish to the highest possible degree. The fact that the media are largely in the hands of external owners, who exploit this politically, not just through individual decisions but at the level of government policy, is entirely unacceptable in a sovereign state” (Nizinkiewicz, 2017).

In early September, Krzysztof Czabański, chairman of the National Media Council (RMN), stated that there was no government policy to repolonize the media (Malinowski, 2016). This led to speculation in liberal media outlets. In October, *Gazeta Wyborcza* announced a potential government takeover of PPG, allegedly through the bank PKO BP (Czuchnowski, 2016); in January, the weekly *Newsweek Polska* reported that PZU SA might purchase regional dailies (Krzyszowski, 2017). However, in both cases, state-owned companies denied the claims (Ib, 2016). On November 30, 2016, the Sejm’s Culture and Media Committee held a meeting where Jarosław Sellin (MKiDN), present at the session, announced that the ministry would work on solutions to ensure greater ownership pluralism in the media in line with EU law (DoRzeczy.pl, 2016). In early February of the following year, a team was formed to draft a repolonization bill. This team included three experts each from the National Broadcasting Council and the Office of Competition and Consumer Protection (OCC), with Paweł Lewandowski (MKiDN) appointed as the head.

In 2017, the concept of repolonization in statements by ZP government representatives began to be increasingly replaced by “deconcentration.” At the beginning of the year, Jarosław Kaczyński remarked, “We want to follow the path of European Union countries, where laws on media deconcentration exist” (Baranowska, 2017). In March, Barbara Bubula (Law and Justice) stated, “The option of deconcentrating the media by legally forcing the divestment of media outlets when a publisher has too

large a market share is under consideration. But I stress that if necessary, a way will be found to break up the monopoly of foreign media groups, such as taking newspapers away from them” (rp.pl, 2017).

In March, it was announced that work on the deconcentration bill would be accelerated, aiming for completion by the summer (PAP, 2017b), with deconcentration specifically targeting the press market (PAP, 2017d). Jarosław Sellin commented, “[...] in the case of media outlets that already have foreign owners, you have to ‘wait for opportunities’ to take them over. [...] This is not just a business where you count money [...]. This is a business where one produces ideological content. It cannot be that this space of very sensitive business is in the hands of non-national capital” (Bartkiewicz, 2017).

The undersecretary of state at the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage also discussed the possibility of state media buying out foreign-owned outlets, stating, “this would be better [...] such a scenario we would not rule out” (Czuchnowski, Kublik, 2017). However, a differing opinion came from Krzysztof Czabański, who noted, “[...] state-owned companies will not buy shares from foreign concerns” (MAWA, 2017).

The media-driven debate on repolonization mainly involved Law and Justice representatives. Ryszard Terlecki (Law and Justice) asserted that the repolonization law should have a social character: “We will consult on the issue of deconcentration of the media market with journalists and publishers in Poland, but we will also seriously listen to the opinions of the countries from which the owners of these media come” (PAP, 2017e).

Terlecki, like Sellin, emphasized two main demands for repolonization: “First, to prevent the concentration of various media in one hand, meaning that one owner owns electronic media, print media, TV stations, radio, portals, and newspapers, consolidating their ownership [referring to cross concentration]. Second, it is unacceptable for these outlets to receive instructions from abroad on how to operate” (PAP, 2017e). This statement was triggered by a letter from Mark Dekan (head of RAS) on March 16, 2017, to employees in Poland, which included opinions on Donald Tusk’s re-election as President of the European Council. Some journalists interpreted the letter as a directive on commenting on current domestic and foreign policy, an event that heightened discussions on repolonization and expedited work on the law.

According to media reports, the draft law regulating the Polish media market, prepared by the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, was scheduled for discussion at a meeting of the Sejm’s Culture and Media

Committee on March 22 and 23, 2017 (Kowalski, 2017a). However, proposals for legal solutions were not presented, and the sessions focused on discussions about the state of media concentration in Poland (Kowalski, 2017b).

In the following months, government representatives continued to assure that work on the law was progressing, a statement confirmed by President Kaczyński (Szaniawski, 2017b). Jarosław Sellin mentioned that the deconcentration bill, being drafted by the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, would be ready in the fall and submitted to the President's office (PAP, 2017c).

Media sources speculated on potential provisions of the law: "The new law would limit the share of foreign capital in media companies to 15–20 percent" (RG, 2017). *Gazeta Wyborcza* (GW) reported, "According to leaks, the statutory limit will apply, for example, to the publishing house Polska Press, owned by the German Passau group, which owns 20 regional dailies across 15 provinces and popular local websites" (Kublik, 2017).

Janusz Kawecki (KRRiT) argued that the deconcentration law should be introduced promptly and should address not only ownership capital (cross concentration) and transparency but also include an assessment of advertising market share (Pabis, 2017, pp. 14–15). In the fall of 2017, Sellin announced, "A draft law on deconcentration of capital in the media is already ready; it is only waiting for a political decision" (PAP, 2017a). Government spokesman Rafał Bochenek echoed this sentiment (AF, ŁR, 2017). Less than a month later, the media reported that Jarosław Kaczyński had halted work on the draft, citing concerns that President Andrzej Duda might not sign the law (Onet.pl, 2017).

In 2017, media reports highlighted survey results on public support for repolonization. The first survey, conducted by the SW Research agency and published in March, revealed polarized opinions: 35% of respondents opposed repolonization, 27% supported it, and 38% had no opinion (Szaniawski, 2017a). Another survey by the media house UM (IPG Mediabrands Group) for *Wirtualnemedi.pl* found that "the changes announced by the government to limit capital concentration in the media are supported primarily by those satisfied with the country's economic situation (78.5%). The least supportive group are those satisfied with their material situation, with only 42% backing the changes" (Mikulski, 2017).

A May survey by *Maison&Partners* reaffirmed the societal polarization: "40% of adult Poles do not see the need for changes in the media,

while 32% have no opinion on the matter. Only 28% support the government's repolonization initiative" (Goczał, 2017). In September, rp.pl published survey results focusing on limits for foreign capital in the Polish media market: "More than one in three respondents believes that the upper limit for foreign capital in Polish media should not exceed 25%" (Szaniawski, 2017b). That same month, CBOS conducted a survey on state involvement in the economy, where repolonization (defined as the buyback of foreign companies operating in Poland) ranked sixth among priority actions for the state in the economic sphere, with 18% support (CBOS, 2017).

At the beginning of 2018, media reports indicated that work on the repolonization bill had been postponed, placed in what was called the "freezer." In January, Paweł Lewandowski stated, "I can translate the deconcentration assumptions into a bill at any time without undue delay" (Rutkowska, 2018). Some ZP government members and supporters of repolonization expected faster progress on the bill. MP Barbara Bubula remarked, "I believe that the absence of this law is a serious limitation in terms of political capability. We are prepared for a strong reaction from certain politicians or the media regarding this legislation. So, please don't be surprised by our cautious approach" ("Gazeta Polska Codziennie", 2018).

Hanna Karp (KRRiT) criticized the manner of work on the bill: "I deeply regret that none of the many ideas reached completion. It comes across as boisterous announcements without follow-through, and lack of political will cannot justify everything" (Falkowski, 2018, pp. M2–M3). Mid-year, there were media reports suggesting that the government was revisiting media deconcentration, though Beata Mazurek, a spokesperson for Law and Justice, refuted these claims (Kublik, 2018).

After the first round of local elections in October 2018, the topic resurfaced in political and public statements. Some Law and Justice politicians attributed poor election results to media influence. Krystyna Pawłowicz (Law and Justice) posted on social media, "But now, it's MEDIA TIME! In my opinion, OPTION ZERO on the RTV market! Reconstruction by expiring all issued rtv concessions and building the market on EU rules, such as those in Germany. Repolonization and civilization! Enough foreign-led TVN or Onet" (original spelling) (Korucu, 2018). In November, Jerzy Gosiewski (PiS) raised the issue of repolonization in a parliamentary interpellation. The Ministry of Culture and National Heritage (MKiDN) responded that it was "not conducting legislative work in this

area” (Wirtualne Media, 2018). Media reports suggested that analytical work was underway, with Lewandowski stating, “The analytical work is actually completed. It ended in February of this year. We commissioned two analyses, and that was the end of it; there were other priorities” (Wirtualne Media, 2018).

The likely reason for postponing the bill was an exchange of letters between Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki and U.S. Ambassador to Poland Georgetta Mosbacher, who expressed concerns over accusations against journalists and executives at TVN and Discovery of promoting fascism. This was related to investigative material on “Superwizjer” about “Hitler’s birthday” (Bochyńska, 2020b).

In early 2019, the issue of the deconcentration law resurfaced when Agora agreed to acquire part of the Eurozet Group’s radio station assets. Jan Szewczak (PiS) submitted an interpellation to the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage (MKiDN), arguing that the transaction conflicted with the goals of repolonization and media demonopolization: “This transaction will contribute to further concentration of media in Poland in foreign hands, perhaps circumventing anti-concentration laws and becoming a source of anti-Christian, anti-national ideology and an instrument of anti-government propaganda” (NB, 2019). MP Barbara Bubula reiterated the need to limit foreign capital in the Polish media market (proposing a cap of 20–25% for a single entity) and highlighted the need to “address ideological imbalance in the media, as ‘anti-Polish media can also be run by Polish citizens’” (NB, 2019). Adam Bielan (Porozumienie) announced a shift in media market reform strategy, stating, “We can’t really legislate on this issue because EU law prevents discrimination based on capital source, as long as it is from EU countries” (Kublik, 2019). Deputy Prime Minister Jarosław Gowin expressed support for market-based deconcentration but noted that “when there is a conflict of interest between Poland and Germany, these newspapers represent the German perspective and interests” (Nizinkiewicz, 2017). He further declared that if the ZP coalition won the election, “one of the government’s tasks would be media repolonization” (Pązik, 2019). This statement led journalists to question the government on the status of the deconcentration law.

Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki and Michał Dworczyk (KPRM) assured there were no plans for repolonization (PAP, 2019a, 2019c). A month later, Minister Piotr Gliński reminded the public that the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage had draft laws “waiting for their political time” (PAP, 2019b). The parliamentary elections on October 13,

2019, did not resolve the issue. P. Sellin continued to emphasize the need for a “political decision” (kb/PR 24, 2019) but assured a Catholic weekly, “We are not letting go of this issue; personally, I am very critical of the media situation in Poland” (Sosnowski, 2019).

In January 2020, Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki stated, “Those currently in power are not concerned with media repolonization” (NB, 2020). During the presidential election later that year, media repolonization was not a campaign issue. However, after the election results were announced, the topic resurfaced in statements from Law and Justice politicians. In an interview with PAP, Jarosław Kaczyński criticized media outlets for “expressing negative comments” about the incumbent president, saying, “The media in Poland should be Polish... We can create more media that look at reality more realistically” (Stawiany, 2020). He added, “There will be a repolonization of the media. This will happen before the end of this Sejm term,” although he noted that “there are no concrete plans or laws yet” (Stawiany, Erling, 2020).

In July, Deputy Prime Minister Piotr Gliński signaled a return to the repolonization agenda (wpolsce.pl, 2020), while Paweł Lewandowski, head of an expert panel, mentioned that legislative work might begin following Kaczyński’s statements (Bochyńska, 2020a). Minister Jarosław Gowin expressed that repolonization had not been formally discussed within the ZP coalition and that he could not envision statutory repolonization (qm, 2020a). In contrast, Antoni Macierewicz (PiS) hoped for the law’s passage, criticizing foreign-owned media for often lacking understanding of Polish conditions and being inclined to attack government actions (qm, 2020b).

Some PiS members became vocal in advocating for repolonization. Janusz Kowalski (PiS) posted on social media, “It’s time for Polish media! RE-PO-LO-NI-ZA-CJA!” (Czuchnowski, 2020). These statements prompted media inquiries. Government spokesman Piotr Müller clarified, “No concrete decisions have been made in this area; there is no draft [repolonization] law.” He emphasized that the focus should be on capital concentration rather than nationality and mentioned that deconcentration should comply with European standards (PAP, 2020a).

Coalition representatives also weighed in. Minister Zbigniew Ziobro (Suwerenna Polska) stated, “As a coalition partner of the Law and Justice party, we prepared a law back in 2016 focused on deconcentration... We will discuss this project, and I hope such a law will proceed” (Nizinkiewicz, 2020). In August and September 2020, Joanna Lichocka (RMN)

spoke repeatedly on deconcentration, stressing its necessity for media pluralism and advocating for provisions based on French law. The end of work on the law was anticipated in the fall (wkt/PR24, 2020; zew, 2020).

In early October, the British weekly *The Economist* published an article titled “Poland’s ruling party may clobber independent media” (Bredow, 2020). In the piece, author Vendeline von Bredow suggested that the Polish government might pressure foreign investors to sell their media holdings (Szynol, 2023, p. 39). The article sparked controversy, especially amid news of ongoing negotiations between PKN Orlen and VGP to acquire PPG’s assets. The topic of drafting a deconcentration law faded from the media spotlight, with the last mention coming in a November statement by Polish President Andrzej Duda: “I would like to see some kind of [repolonization] project that proposes any solutions in this regard” (AB, PAP, 2020).

2. PPG ownership change: executive stage (XII 2020–VI 2021)

On December 7, 2020, Daniel Obajtek, CEO of PKN Orlen, announced that the state-owned company was acquiring PPG’s assets from VGP. Three days later, Orlen applied to the Office of Competition and Consumer Protection (OCCP) for approval of the acquisition (“Press,” 2021a, p. 8). Shortly after the announcement, Obajtek remarked, “This is business. Not only have we acquired the Ruch group, but we are also building our Sigma Bis media house.” A PAP statement noted that “the creation of proprietary communication platforms to support business operations and reach new customers by companies is a global trend observed for years” (PAP, 2020b).

VGP justified its decision to sell PPG, stating, “We decided to sell for strategic reasons. The transaction will allow us to continue pursuing the growth strategy we have initiated in recent years, particularly in Germany” (Boroń, 2020). On December 14, Adam Bodnar (RPO) submitted comments to the OCCP (UOKiK) concerning the acquisition. A week later, the OCCP responded, stating that “decisions of the antimonopoly authority in concentration cases are aimed solely at evaluating planned concentrations from a competition perspective, as the President of the Office is only empowered by law for this purpose” (*UOKiK oceni...*, 2020).

Simultaneously, TD issued a statement to journalists at the acquired editorial offices, promising to monitor potential layoffs. The ownership

change of PPG was positively received by the ZG of SDP, which stated, “We see this as an opportunity to break the dominance of foreign publishers in the regional printed press and regional portal markets in Poland. We appeal for the establishment of transparent mechanisms to ensure respect for freedom of speech, pluralism of views, and journalistic independence” (*Uchwała ZG SDP...*, 2020).

At the turn of 2020 and 2021, the weekly *Sieci* magazine published an interview with Orlen’s CEO regarding the acquisition of the media company. He stated, “Sometimes you can kill two birds with one stone. First, this is a business that even the stock market has reacted positively to. This is the most important thing. And second, a Polish company buys a media company that was previously in the hands of a German owner.” When asked about the editorial management strategy, he responded, “We are a company that adheres in all areas to the highest standards. This will also be the case with the media. [...] I would like Polska Press media to be independent, ensuring that editorial offices are not burdened by local considerations. With a reliable partner like Orlen behind the Polska Press editorial offices, their independence and freedom will increase significantly” (*Nie mógłbym...*, 2021, pp. 23–24).

In January 2021, the Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights (HFPC) expressed criticism over the state-owned company’s acquisition of PPG in an opinion sent to the OCCP. They stated, “In our opinion, PKN Orlen’s actions are contrary to the constitutional principle of media freedom, which precludes legal subordination to political authorities. A press published by a company in which politicians exercise actual supervision cannot, by definition, fulfill its assigned tasks, particularly those related to social control and criticism” (*Przejęcie Polska Press...*, [no date]). The Polish Chamber of Press Publishers (IWP) also released a statement, noting that “the clustering of all the links in the chain of creation and perception of press content raises a huge potential for an adverse impact on the entire market, [...] [and it can] threaten free competition” (Mat, 2021).

On February 5, 2021, the OCCP approved PKN Orlen’s acquisition of PPG, stating, “The planned concentration will not affect competition in the local press publishing market, where Polska Press is present and PKN Orlen was not present before. Only the owner of Polska Press will change, while the market shares of its individual participants remain unchanged.” Initial media reports estimated the purchase price of PPG’s assets at approximately PLN 120 million (Kublik, 2021). However, Orlen’s

April financial statement later revealed the amount was PLN 210 million (tw, 2021b).

In February, the Ombudsman (RPO) sent another letter to the Office of Competition and Consumer Protection (OCCP) requesting “access to the files of the antitrust proceedings on the acquisition of Polska Press by PKN Orlen” (*Kalendarium...*, 2021). At the same time, Orlen’s chairman advocated for the transaction, stating, “Access to 17.4 million users of portals managed by Polska Press will effectively strengthen sales across the Orlen Group, optimize marketing costs, and enable further expansion of big data tools” (PAP, 2021).

On February 26, Paweł Fałara, PPG’s editor-in-chief, addressed the acquisition in an open letter published across all PPG dailies titled “In the name of principles and freedom.” He wrote, “We will not deviate from the principles that guide us – independent, honest, free journalism. As long as we can, we will do our job. We will not take a step back. Because we are journalists” (tw, 2021a).

Without waiting for a potential appeal of the OCCP’s decision, a sale agreement for PPG was signed between VGP and PKN Orlen on March 1, 2021. The OCCP’s decision was subsequently appealed by the Ombudsman, who petitioned the court to annul the transaction, arguing that the office “failed to examine whether the effect would be an impermissible restriction of press freedom” (*Zapewnić...*, 2021). On March 18, the Warsaw District Court registered the RPO’s request “to halt the execution of the transaction for PKN Orlen’s purchase of Polska Press,” including a ban on Orlen’s exercise of its shareholding rights in Polska Press (*Kalendarium...*, 2021). However, without waiting for the court’s rulings, PKN Orlen initiated ownership actions. Dorota Kania was appointed to PPG’s board of directors, replacing Paweł Fałara, who was dismissed on April 1 (“Press,” 2021b, pp. 5–6), and the company’s supervisory board was replaced a week later.

On April 7, Orlen requested the court to dismiss the Ombudsman’s request to halt the transaction. Five days later, the court temporarily halted the OCCP’s approval of Orlen’s acquisition of PPG, granting the Ombudsman’s request (*Kalendarium...*, 2021), stating that Orlen should “refrain from exercising any shareholding rights from the acquired shares” (*Sąd ws....*, 2021). In mid-April, members of PPG’s employee unions met with CEO Daniel Obajtek, who assured them there would be no layoffs or interference in published content (Szynol, 2023, p. 52). Despite this, personnel changes took place at the company’s headquar-

ters and regional branches, with replacements of editors-in-chief beginning in May 2021.

The process of PKN Orlen's acquisition of PPG concluded in mid-September 2021, with Orlen officially registered as "the sole owner of PPG in the National Register of Companies" (Szynol, 2023, p. 47). In June 2022, the OCC court dismissed the RPO's appeal, stating that "there is no risk of limiting this value [concerning media pluralism], as consumers, by analyzing press content, retain the right to choose and thereby shape the media market" (*Sąd oddalil...*, 2022).

Conclusion

The analysis of the preparatory process for adopting the repolonization/deconcentration law yields several conclusions: 1) A lack of a cohesive information policy by the government concerning the progress of the law, as evidenced by discrepancies in inter-ministerial communications; 2) Inconsistent intra-coalition views on operationalizing the concept of media repolonization. Since 2017, it was interchangeably referred to as "deconcentration," highlighting the differing positions among PiS (Law and Justice) members, Suwerenna Polska (Sovereign Poland), and Porozumienie Centrum (Center Agreement). These differences stemmed from varying worldviews among coalition voters, leading to an unclear, fragmented concept of the law's content and its presentation to the public; 3) A dominance of ideological discourse (repolonization) over economic (deconcentration) and legal considerations (compliance with EU law) in the statements of government representatives and ZP members; 4) The ad hoc use of repolonization as an ideological slogan in contemporary politics, including as commentary on the 2018 local elections and the 2020 presidential elections. This use also reflects demands from some Law and Justice circles to promote repolonization as an electoral issue, often accompanied by strong anti-German rhetoric; 5) Diverse opinions among ZP politicians regarding state-owned companies' acquisition of media outlets, revealing heterogeneity within the coalition on this issue.

The purchase of PPG media by the state-owned company PKN Orlen stands as the only tangible outcome of media repolonization efforts. Although discussions about restoring Polish capital in the media intensified post-2015, the issue had long been a topic among conservative-right journalistic and political circles, who criticized the dominance of liberal-

left media. Additionally, some media scholars had previously highlighted the adverse effects of foreign capital concentration within the regional daily segment. Ultimately, the political project of media repolonization was never fully realized; the draft repolonization law was never made public. The acquisition of PPG's assets by a state-owned company now faces varied evaluations from media analysts and awaits final strategic or ownership-related decisions.

In 2023, two studies were published examining the effects of PPG's ownership change, both based on interviews with former and current employees of the company. In his monograph, Adam Szynol offered several theses on the market state of PPG's regional dailies. Meanwhile, the HFPR report, "From Regional Press to Orlen Press: The Situation in the Media Owned by Polska Press" (by Zuzanna Nowicka, Konrad Siemaszko, and Małgorzata Szuleka), suggests that the ownership change has negatively impacted journalistic freedom. Similarly, Jolanta Dzierżyńska-Mielczarek argues that repolonization and deconcentration efforts have been disruptive to the media market (Dzierżyńska-Mielczarek, 2024, pp. D-VI–D-VII). In contrast, Kazimierz Wolny-Zmorzyński contends that foreign organizations' reports, which indicate a decline in media freedom in Poland, reflect the views of groups unfavorable to repolonization, such as certain media circles, academics, associations, and NGOs. He argues that despite PPG's state ownership, media pluralism remains robust, with a "high level of freedom of speech" (Wolny-Zmorzyński, 2024, pp. P-Q-VI–P-Q-VII). Following the KO party's victory in the October 2023 parliamentary elections, PPG received offers to purchase its assets, though no decisions have yet been made. The future of the regional press, particularly in light of these shifts, remains uncertain. What is clear, however, is that media scholars must continue to monitor the sector, analyzing factors such as political parallelism, journalistic independence, pluralism, and content bias.

List of abbreviations:

GW – "Gazeta Wyborcza"

HFPC – Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights

IWP – Chamber of Press Publishers

KO – Civic Coalition

KPRM – Prime Minister's Office of the Council of Ministers

KRRiT – National Broadcasting Council

MKiDN – Minister of Culture and National Heritage

ND – “Nasz Dziennik”
NP – “Newsweek Polska”
PAP – Polish Press Agency
PiS – Law and Justice Party
PKN Orlen – Polski Koncern Naftowy Orlen
PO – Civic Platform
PPG – Polish Press Group
RAS – Ringier Axel Springer
RMN – National Media Council
RP – “Rzeczpospolita”
RPO – Ombudsman for Civil Rights
SDP – Association of Polish Journalists
TD – Journalism Society
UOKiK – Office of Competition and Consumer Protection
ZP – United Right Party
VGP – Verlagsgruppe Passau

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Repolonizacja mediów – od koncepcji ustawy do zmiany właścicielskiej Polska Press Grupa (kalendarium 2015–2021)

Streszczenie

W ostatnich latach w polskim systemie medialnym nastąpiło szereg zmian, dotyczyły one przede wszystkim reformy mediów publicznych oraz zmiany własnościowej w segmencie codziennej prasy regionalnej. Jednym z postulatów wyborczych rządu Zjednoczonej Prawicy (2015–2023) była realizacja koncepcji repolonizacji mediów. Pomimo zapowiedzi prac nad ustawą repolonizacyjną/dekoncentracyjną, nie doszło do jej przyjęcia; jedynym efektem wieloletnich dyskusji nad jej zapisami

był zakup od Verlagsgruppe Passau przez spółkę PKN Orlen aktywów Polska Press Grupy. Artykuł ma charakter deskrypcyjny, jego celem jest chronologiczne przedstawienie wydarzeń związanych z procesem repolonizacji polskich mediów w latach 2015–2021. Najistotniejsze fakty kategoryzuję w dwóch etapach – koncepcyjnym i wykonawczym. W badaniu wykorzystano informacje i opinie członków rządu, parlamentu oraz wybranych przedstawicieli instytucji publicznych, publikowane w zróżnicowanych profilowo mediach.

Słowa kluczowe: repolonizacja mediów, dzienniki regionalne w Polsce, Polska Press Grupa, PKN Orlen