

Country fact sheet

Poland



Key findings

In the context of **news deserts** in Poland, a significant issue is that many regions solely depend on **local government-owned media**. These media outlets are owned by local government authorities (municipalities, counties, voivodeships), and are subject to their control and influence.

While local media operate in these areas, it does not mean that they effectively carry out their fundamental functions, like scrutinising local authorities or delivering reliable information to the audience.

Local government-owned media



The data of the Civic Network Watchdog show that **80% of local governments run their own print media outlets**, counting for about 1,160 press titles.

Independent local radio stations



There are 118 independent local radio stations in Poland, according to a 2021 KRRiT report.

However, **their area of influence can be considered small**, as they cover only 18.75% of the country.



In the largest Polish metropolises, apart from a few exceptions, there are no publishers of independent local press and local information portals.

City residents can therefore draw almost exclusively from the local titles of **Polska Press**, which belongs to the State Treasury Company PKN Orlen.



Main causes of local media struggles in Poland

- Closure of points of sales post-pandemic
- Decline in advertising revenues
- Inflation, escalating energy costs, and paper costs resulting, among others, from the war in Ukraine
- Lack of qualified local journalistic staff
- Arbitrary allocation of advertising by state or public entities
- Lack of financial state support for independent media



Lawsuits and SLAPP cases

A big problem for local journalists are **lawsuits**, which, even if they do not result in a court verdict unfavourable to publishers and editors, still effectively engage their time and money resulting in chilling effects on their work.

SLAPP cases are severely underestimated due to the lack of awareness that a pending case may be vexatious and because of the reluctance of journalists to inform the public about having such a problem



The lack of a regulatory framework to limit political influence

In Poland, the relevant legislation **lacks regulatory safeguards** to curb political control over the media through ownership. Also, the rules and procedures for granting subsidies remain unclear.

Over 55% to 60% of Polish communes run newspapers that are not really part of the independent local media market.

A related concerning element is the activity of **Polska Press**, that brings together a significant number of regional titles. *Polska Press* was acquired by a state-owned company, and key decisions are influenced more by political considerations than business objectives. This translates, for instance, to personnel changes within acquired media or the issuance of central instructions regarding the editorial line.

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