

Aleksandra Chmielewska, Marlena Kondrat
Collegium Civitas

The imbalance in numbers between men and women on boards of directors and supervisory boards of the main TV broadcasters in Poland

Introduction

The media market encompasses the broadcasting industry, including radio and television, the publishing industry, including newspapers, magazines, books, and web portals, as well as the film and music industry. It has close ties to the advertising market [Wolf 1999:21]. Due to the dispersion of broadcasters and consumers, this market is classified as an asymmetric substitution market, which means that when one of the products has features lacking in the other, the substitution occurs one-way only [Jaegher 2011:12]. The media industry appreciates high communication skills, teamwork ability, and language competences such as writing texts. Graduates of social sciences programmes (such as journalism and social communication, media logistics and administration, and marketing) are predominantly women. These programmes favour the development of skills necessary in the media industry. As mass media develop, women are increasingly employed in the industry. They are recognised as acute observers of social events, which helps to ensure that their work is appreciated by consumers. Most often, women work as journalists, columnists, or bloggers [WUP 2017]. An analysis of boards of directors of the main players in the Polish media market reveals a pronounced dominance of men in managing positions. Even though the female sex dominates in professions related to the media market, the highest positions are still occupied by men. GroupM data show that 79% of CEOs of advertising agencies are male. While women

are quite often found among executives, female management board members or company owners are rare [GroupM 2020].

Both in Europe and globally, the media market allows both public and private media to exist. Their scope of activity is identical and includes the provision of audio-visual services and the creation and distribution of broadcasting materials. The differences between them relate to the manner of financing their enterprises, their operational objectives, and organisational structures. In the case of these enterprises, competitive advantage may be achieved based on developing content and technological resources as well as intangible resources related to the value of employees [Wasilczak 2005:80-81]. It is important to ensure equal treatment for employees in all positions, regardless of their sex.

The purpose of this article is to demonstrate the imbalance in employment of men and women on boards of directors and supervisory boards of selected media companies: Telewizja Polska, Grupa TVN, Canal+ Polska and Grupa Polsat Plus. This choice of TV broadcasters is dictated by their size and popularity on the Polish TV market as well as the availability of data necessary to conduct the research. This article uses non-reactive research methods such as analysis of available subject literature concerning inequalities on the labour market, review of legal instruments, and analysis of Central Statistical Office data and documents of selected media entities that are publicly available online.

Professional activity of men and women in Poland compared to the European Union

The professional activity of women, who on average have a higher level of education than men, is important from the economic point of view [Woolley, Malone 2012; Lisowska 2013]. In Poland, the position of women on the labour market is determined by the traditional approach to their role in the family and society. Consequently, institutional forms of supporting and promoting female professional activity are few. Although Polish law guarantees equal rights and prohibits any form of discrimination, the disadvantaged position of employed women remains a fact [Lisowska 2016]. As noted by numerous researchers, women are subjected to the social pressure of balancing family and professional life, which is not easy in Polish society and generates a conflict of roles [Zachorowska-Mazurkiewicz 2006; Musiał-Karg 2009; Haponiuk 2013].

Analysing reports and data show that across all EU countries, there is a lower level of professional activity of women in comparison with men. Women work less hours on average, occupy lower positions than men, and are employed in sectors with poorer wages. The sex-based disparity in wages is to some extent rooted in tradition and firmly entrenched stereotypes concerning the sexes and the roles assigned to them [Adamczyk, Gorzelany-Plesińska 2008:41–42; Haponiuk 2013:2].

A factor of key importance for the purpose of analysing changes in labour markets is the employment index. A report for the European Council on the future of the EU until 2030 notes the necessity of acting directed at increasing the female employment index, which now stands at 58.3% on average for EU member states and is lower than in the case of men (72.5%). In Poland, the employment index is 64% for men and 48.9% for women [Projekt Europa 2030]. To change this situation, it is necessary to take action to oppose discrimination, and focus on equal opportunities and childcare programmes as well as school education systems that help parents focus on their professional work.

According to Eurostat, in 2020 women earned 13% less than men in the EU. The largest wages gap was noted in Latvia (22.3%), Estonia (21.1%), Austria (18.9%) and Germany (18.3%). The EU countries with the smallest gap in female wages included Luxembourg (0.7%), Romania (2.4%) and Slovenia

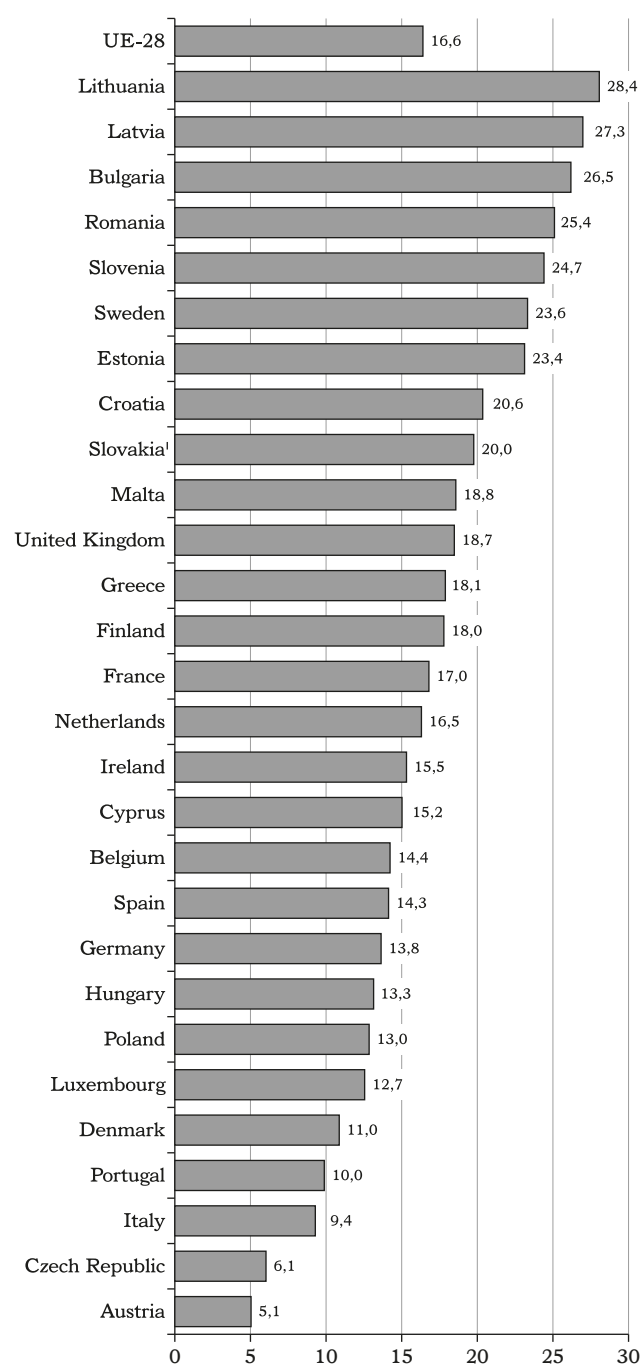
(3.1%) [Eurostat 2021]. According to Eurostat, in Poland the gap (8.5%) is rather low compared to the EU average. It should be noted, however, that these data do not take into account any labour market peculiarities [PwC 2022]. The largest disparity of wages between women and men occurs among employees with higher education [GUS 2022].

The marked difference between the sexes with respect to professional activity is primarily the result of burdening women with care duties and is more visible in countries in which care services for children or the elderly/dependents are difficult to access. As a rule, the longer women stay outside the labour market or remain unemployed for a long time due to care duties, the harder it is for them to find work. Thus, care duties are the main reason for the lack of professional activity among women [European Commission 2015, Kondrat 2021:180–185]. The disparity in part-time employment of men and women remains high. Because caring for dependants usually falls on women, they are forced to reduce the amount of time spent in paid employment. In 2018, 30.8% of EU women were employed part-time. This percentage was much higher than in the case of men (8%). The differences are visible particularly in Malta, Germany, Greece, Austria, Italy, and the United Kingdom [Eurostat 2019]. On a weekly basis, men in EU countries work for wages six hours longer, on average, than women.

Traditional gender roles, lack of support allowing men and women to balance their care and professional duties, as well as corporate culture are only some of the reasons why women are not sufficiently represented in decision-making processes. The number of female-led companies is growing with each year, but women are still disadvantaged when it comes to being appointed to a board of directors or supervisory board. As noted by Revenga and Sudhir, social and economic development is not possible without the active participation of women in all walks of life, which is why promoting sex equality in business is so important [Revenga, Sudhir 2012:40]. The Deloitte *Women in the boardroom: A global perspective* shows that in 2021 only 19.7% of board seats were held and 6.7% of boards chaired by women. Women accounted for 5% of board of director chairs. The Deloitte report suggests that in companies traded on the Warsaw Stock Exchange 11.6% of supervisory board chairs and 5.1% of management board chairs are held by women [Deloitte 2022]. According to Eurostat data, in 2018 the share of women in the two top executive bodies of the largest publicly trad-

ed European companies was 16.6% for the entire EU, compared to 13% in Poland (Figure 1). The fact that men are found in the upper and top management positions more often than women is one of the reasons for the sex wage gap.

Figure 1. Share of women on boards of directors and supervisory boards of publicly traded companies in the EU countries in 2018 (in %)



Source: own research based on [Eurostat 2019]

According to data of the Central Statistical Office, the number of professionally active persons with a university diploma grows each year. In 2016-2020, the increase was 10.3% [COS 2020]. Female university graduates experience inequality regarding wages; among people with higher education, the wages of men are 44.4% higher compared to those of women [CSO 2021]. According to Eurostat, Poland ranks first in the European Union as far as educating women in STEM [Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics] is concerned. Polish women learn the sciences more frequently than their counterparts in Germany, Switzerland, or Norway [Eurostat 2021]. Nevertheless, they earn less than men.

In Poland, a growing dominance of women in the public sector can be observed. Professions such as nurses, teachers, low-level clerks, or social workers are among the most feminised. In 2018, the share of women working in healthcare, social services and education was about 82%. Women can be observed to dominate also in professions related to entertainment, culture, and recreation. In these sectors, the share of women was 62% [GUS 2022].

A major factor that determines the position of women on the labour market, both in Poland and the EU, was the COVID-19 pandemic, during which more women than men left the market. According to the Deloitte report, more than two thirds of Polish working women believe that the pandemic has greatly hampered the development of their careers. Lockdowns and the resulting administrative decisions related to shutting down education and care centres caused a drop in the number of women on the labour market [Deloitte 2021].

Statistical data clearly demonstrate the disadvantaged position of women on the labour market of EU countries. Despite many actions undertaken by EU bodies, male and female employees are still not treated equally. Enforcing the “equal wages for equal work” principle remains a challenge for all EU countries, as does opposing stereotypes related to the duties of men and women in society. Bolstering the position of women in the labour market sphere is of key importance for accelerating sustainable development. In practice, the equality of sexes means an equal share of men and women in formal education, labour market and management positions, as well as equal pay for work of equal value. As demonstrated by PwC analyses, closing the gap in wages of men and women could increase the GDP of all OECD countries by more than USD 2 trillion per year [PwC 2022].

Men and women on boards of directors of selected media companies in Poland

Research concerning the number of women in management positions in publicly traded companies, both earlier [Lisowska 2010] and recent [PwC 2022], shows that the share of women on boards of directors and supervisory boards is minor and the change dynamics very slow. Despite the systematic increase of female employment in publicly traded companies, management positions are in the main occupied by men. According to Eurostat data, in the third quarter of 2020, management positions in the EU were held by more than 9.5 million people: 6.2 million men and 3.3 million women. Even though women account for almost one half (46%) of all EU employees, they are underrepresented in the managing staff (34%) [Eurostat 2021]. Among EU member states, the highest share of women in management positions has been noted in Latvia (45%) and Poland (44%) and the lowest in Croatia (24%) and the Netherlands (26%) [Eurostat 2021].

Equal rights are a challenge for many sectors of the labour market, including the creative industry, which is eagerly watched and rated by consumers. The results of a 2020 Ipsos Social Values Research survey show that as many as 57% consumers expect brands to take a clear stance on equality [Ipsos 2021].

An analysis of results of the research carried out using the CAWI method in 2021 with the participation of almost 500 men and women (rounded off by in-depth interviews with 26 women) has been published in the *Equality 2022* report [Raport Równość 2022]. Respondents included employees of advertising agencies, media houses, marketing and PR departments, PR agencies, and producing agencies. The majority (66%) of survey participants was under 39 years old. Most participants (73%) had a higher education and lived and worked in the Mazowieckie region (81%). The bulk of respondents were employed under an employment agreement (71%). 23% of those surveyed claimed to run their own business. The study was conducted on a group of lower-, middle- and upper-management employees and team managers. Many participants (58%) believed that in the marketing and advertisement world, the voice of men is appreciated and considered more, while 63% asserted that women are underrepresented in the management of corpo-

rations and that promotions are much more often offered to men. Men were mostly (61%) of the opinion that chances of promotion are not dependent on sex. 73% of women participating in the survey answered that according to them, men are paid more, while 65% of men said that men and women are remunerated equally. Although women are the majority of employees in marketing and advertising, they do not have equal opportunities to compete with men in their jobs. 43% of women participate in major events of the company, but it is men who more frequently attend conferences, meetings, and presentations (66%), while only 9% of women take the stage at such events as experts, and 6% speak publicly or appear as speakers during industry events.

During in-depth interviews, women admitted that they were much less frequently positioned as leaders or 'faces' of businesses or those who present the results of collective work. They said that they conduct a project only up to a certain stage, remain behind the scenes, and are not congratulated when the project or presentation is successful. As many as 76% of women would like to participate in training, conferences, and development programmes, while 44% of them wished they could more frequently take an active role in presentations and meetings that are important from the company's viewpoint [Raport Równość 2022].

The creative market, which also includes the TV market, has for many years been heavily off-limits for women, especially as regards access to high management positions. However, over the last few years changes in boards of directors have been observed, and the number of women on them is increasing.

Grupa CANAL+ Polska S.A. is a company offering a wide range of services on the television media market. As a broadcaster of premium TV channels and satellite operator servicing about 2.7 million customers [Materiały źródłowe Grupy CANAL + Polska 2020], it is the second largest distributor of pay television packages in Poland. As a brand, CANAL+ is recognised worldwide and has a particularly strong image in France. It is considered a brand synonymous with exclusivity and excellence [Prospekt emisyjny Grupy CANAL+ Polska 2022]. The company is also a satellite operator that broadcasts and receives channels [Business Insider 2019]. In addition to wide cable and satellite distribution of channels, it offers the nc+go app that allows on-demand viewing of TV programmes. In 2020, CANAL+ Polska launched an OTT platform called CANAL+. The platform offers 76 channels and

VOD content with more than 35,000 on-demand titles, all of which are available online. In addition to developing products and services for consumers, the company strives to ensure diversity of its board of directors and management board members in respect of sex, education, age, and professional experience [CANAL+ Polska issuing prospectus 2022]. The CANAL+ Polska board of directors consists of three women and two men [<https://corporate.pl.canalplus.com/pl-pl/wladze-firmy>]. Members of the board of directors are among key executives in the meaning of IAS24 and are thus affiliates of the company. Out of the eight members of the CANAL+ supervisory board, one is a woman. Grupa CANAL+, as a privately owned company, intends to and has declared that it will follow a sustainable policy and focus on employee development regardless of sex.

TVN Grupa Discovery is one of the largest and most rapidly growing broadcasters. Its board of directors consists of six people, three of whom are women. The board's chair, doubling as the President & Managing Director of Warner Bros Discovery in Poland and the TVN CEO, is female. The supervisory board is represented by three persons, including two women. The TVN Grupa Discovery website does not contain information about an equal rights policy.

Telewizja Polska is a public broadcaster launched on 25 October 1952, when the first TV programme was broadcast in cooperation with the Institute of Communication, followed by a regular schedule since January 1953. Two years later, the Ministry of Communication initiated the drafting of a state-level document outlining the growth of television in Poland. Telewizja Polska S.A. is a state-owned enterprise and as a joint-stock company acts based on the Code of Commercial Companies as well as the Radio and Television Act [Uchwała 2007]. The conditions set out in the Radio and Television Act regulate the work of public broadcasters and specify their rights and duties. One of the main tasks of TVP S.A. is the broadcasting of 'news, editorial, cultural, entertainment, educational and sport programmes that comply with the principle of multiple views, impartiality, balance and independence as well as innovation, high quality and integrity of the transmission' [Uchwała 2007, Article 21.1]. The board of directors and supervisory board of Telewizja Polska consists exclusively of men [Wirtualne Media 2022]. The official website of TVP and available documents do not mention any equal rights policy or sustainable development standards. It may there-

fore be assumed that the entity's strategy does not involve a conscious human resource policy prohibiting sex-based discrimination.

This is unlike Grupa Polsat Plus, which in 2021 published a Sustainable Development Report that included all its subsidiaries, specifically Cyfrowy Polsat S.A., Polkomtel Sp. z o.o., Telewizja Polsat Sp. z o.o. and Grupa Kapitałowa Netia S.A. [Raport zrównoważonego rozwoju Grupy Polsat Plus 2021]. An analysis of the personnel structure of Polsat Group shows that 50% of the board of directors are women, in contrast with an all-male supervisory board. Polsat Plus has a headcount of 7,500 employees, 41.6% of whom are women. Polsat Plus declares its commitment to a policy of equality in employment, development and educational opportunities regardless of sex. The group follows a sustainable development strategy and focuses strongly on transparency and equal rights.

Based on the above analysis of selected media companies, only Telewizja Polska fails to include a single woman on the board of directors and supervisory board. Except for TVP, all the analysed companies have strategic documents that officially mention equal rights or sustainable development.

Conclusion

This article analyses data on professional activity of men and women, with a special emphasis on the media market, and shows that promoting equal rights on the Polish labour market, especially in entities owned by the state, is still a must. Although many companies openly present information on actions taken to oppose sex-based discrimination, inequality remains a persistent problem as most of the top positions are occupied by men. Sex-based stereotypes in the context of social roles, the traditional view of female roles, as well as insufficient support offered to men and women as regards balancing care and professional duties are the main reasons for the disadvantaged position of women on the labour market. In the case of the television market, privately-owned companies with foreign investors set a good example of how to strive for equal rights by including females in both boards of directors and management boards, while Telewizja Polska does not have women in these decision-making bodies.

This article discusses the situation in just four selected enterprises from the media sector. To show

a wider perspective, it is suggested to analyse and study a larger number of media market companies over a longer period. Another interesting starting point for research may be studying the financial results of media enterprises in which the number of women holding executive positions has increased.

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