

## Monitoring of the 2019 European Parliament election campaign in the main news programme of Polish public TV

### Introduction

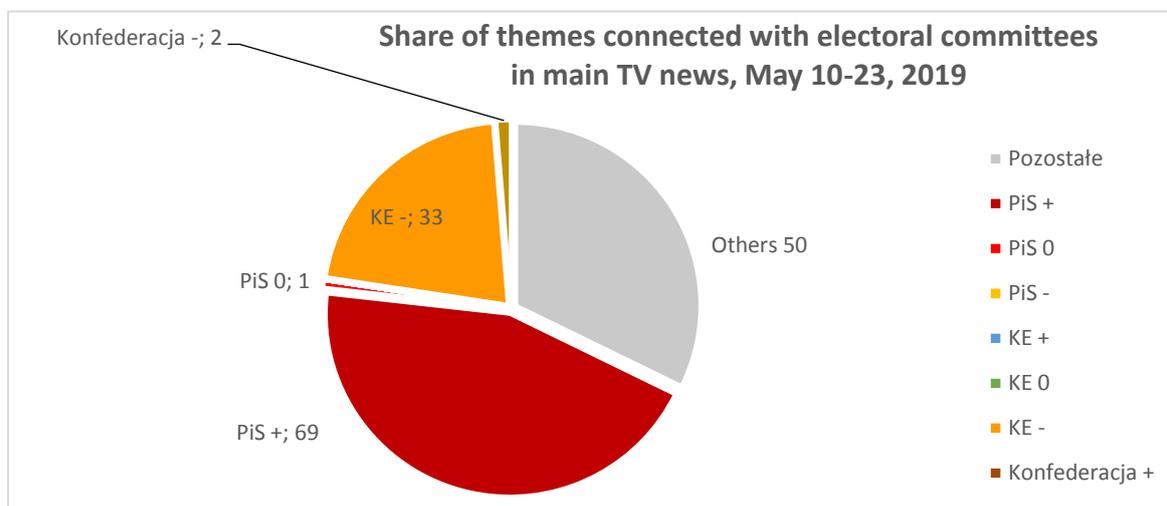
Between May 10-24, 2019 a team of 8 observers from the Society of Journalists with monitored the main public TV news “Wiadomości” (2,4 million viewers) broadcast daily at 7.30 pm on a public TV channel 1. The aim of the monitoring was to check how public TV fulfills its obligation to comply with the rules of pluralism, impartiality, well-balancing and independence of content (art.21.1 of the Broadcasting Act).

The monitoring was conducted in cooperation with and support of the Stefan Batory Foundation and was based on the jointly developed methodology. The monitoring measured the time of presentation in “Wiadomości” of six national party committees and their leading candidates and evaluated the tone of presentation (neutral, positive, negative). Instances of propaganda, picture and voice manipulation, false and fake news, hate speech and omissions of important news were tracked and recorded.

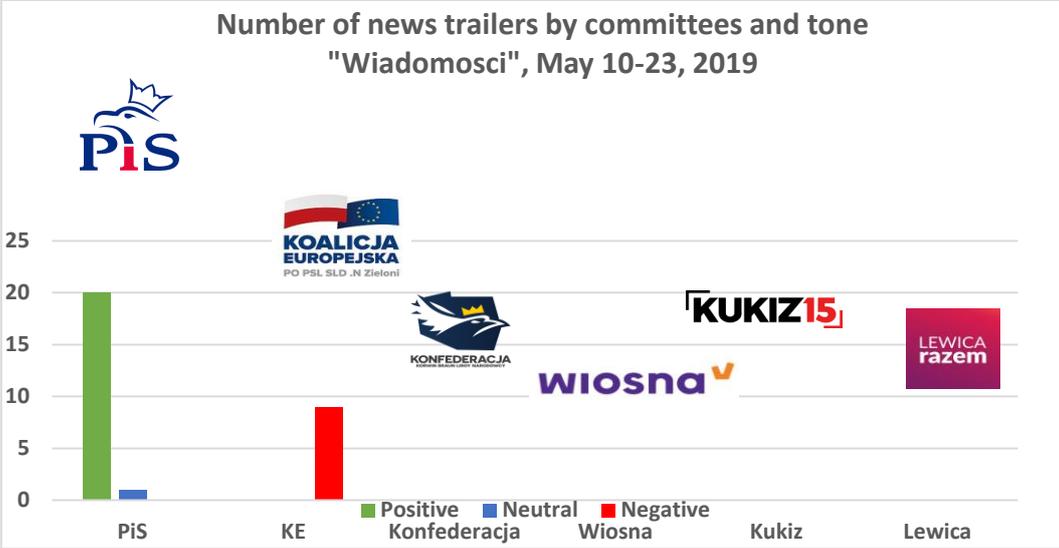
### Report from monitoring

#### Part one: quantitative analysis

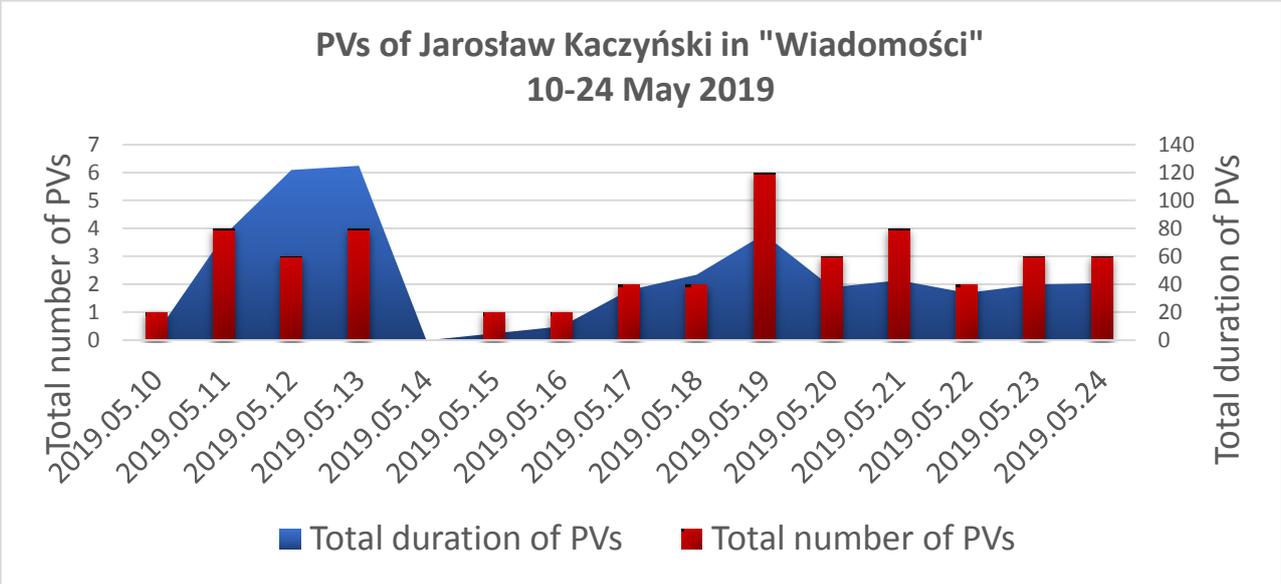
Between May 10 - May 23, 2019 two thirds of the news items (105 out of 153) reported by the main TVP evening news programme “Wiadomości”, were election related. 69 of these covering the ruling Law and Justice party (PiS) were positive, one was neutral. The European Coalition, an alliance composed of the oppositional parties, was mentioned in 33 items, all of which in negative context. A further two items, also negative, covered the Confederation [Konfederacja], a committee formed of extreme nationalist groups to the right of PiS. Other



parties running in the election such as the Spring [Wiosna], a newly founded progressive liberal party, Together [Razem], a new-left party and populist Kukiz 15 political movement led by a onetime rock singer Paweł Kukiz, were not mentioned at all.

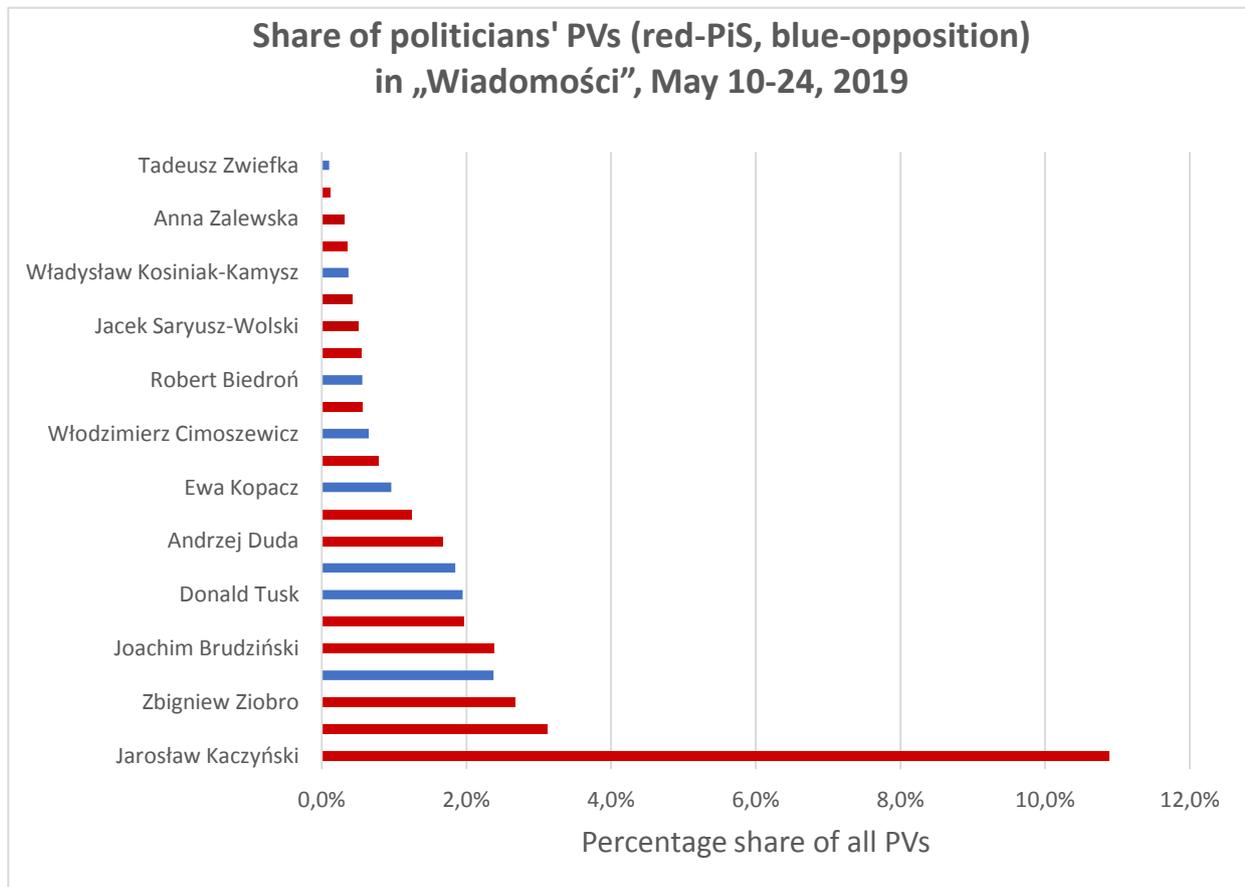


Out of 48 trailers of news items (3-4 daily) introduced at the beginning of the programme to signal the main news themes, 30 were related to elections. Among them 20 (positive or neutral) were about PiS, 9 (all negative) related to European Coalition, the rest did not concern elections.



Jarosław Kaczyński, the PiS party leader, was the most visible politician in „Wiadomości”, with the longest and most frequent coverage. His picture and voice (PV) appearances reached 12 min 18 sec. i.e. 11% of all PVs in the monitoring period. His PVs were repeated several times. On May 12 he was present in 3 news items for 2 min. 2 sec., next day in 4 news items for 2 min. 5 sec. including an excerpt from a 13 minutes long interview for a late breakfast nonpolitical TVP programme. For two weeks the only day without the leader of the ruling party in “Wiadomości” was May 14. On the last day before mandatory “election

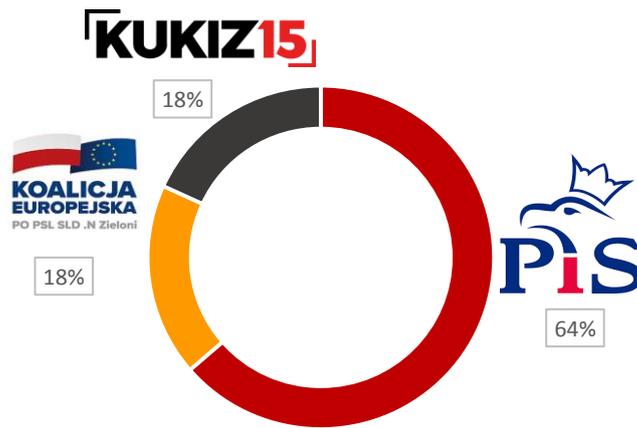
silence” (May 24), Kaczyński was invited for an interview to the post-news programme “Wiadomości’s Guest” which was introduced in the main news for 8 min. 32 sec. This raised his total PV time in “Wiadomości” to 21 minutes.



Among the five most frequently covered politicians in “Wiadomości” were the leaders of the ruling party: Jarosław Kaczyński, Beata Szydło, Zbigniew Ziobro and Joachim Brudziński. The leader of the oppositional European Coalition, Grzegorz Schetyna, was the fourth in the ranking, prime minister Mateusz Morawiecki was the sixth, seventh and eighth were president of the Council of Europe, Donald Tusk and Rafał Grupański, an MP from the Civic Platform (recorded by a hidden camera during street demonstration on May 18 and broadcast by “Wiadomości” for 7 consecutive days). The first ten was closed by the president Andrzej Duda and Mariusz Błaszczak, a minister of defence from PiS.

During the monitoring period 21 politicians appeared in the „Wiadomości’s Guest” slot ran at the end of the news (a several minutes announcement of a talking heads programme broadcast daily after the main TV news in the 24h news channel TVP Info). 13 of them were from PiS, 4 from the opposition parties: Nowoczesna and Peasant Party (PSL) - members of the European Coalition, and 4 from right-wing populist Kukiz15 association. This gave their electoral committees 64% and 18% of coverage respectively.

„Wiadomosci Guests", 10-23 May 2019



**Part two: Qualitative analysis**

During the monitoring period the following patterns of presentation and editing of news items in “Wiadomości” were observed:

**1. Clustering and reinforcing news positive for the ruling party and negative for the opposition**

May10	May11	May12	May13	May14	May15	May16	May17	May18	May19	May20	May21	May22	May23
Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	White	Green	Red	White	Green	Red	Green	Green	Green
Green	Green	White	Green	Green	White	Red	Green	White	Red	Red	Green	Green	White
Green	Green	White	White	White	Green	Green	White	White	Red	Green	Green	Green	Green
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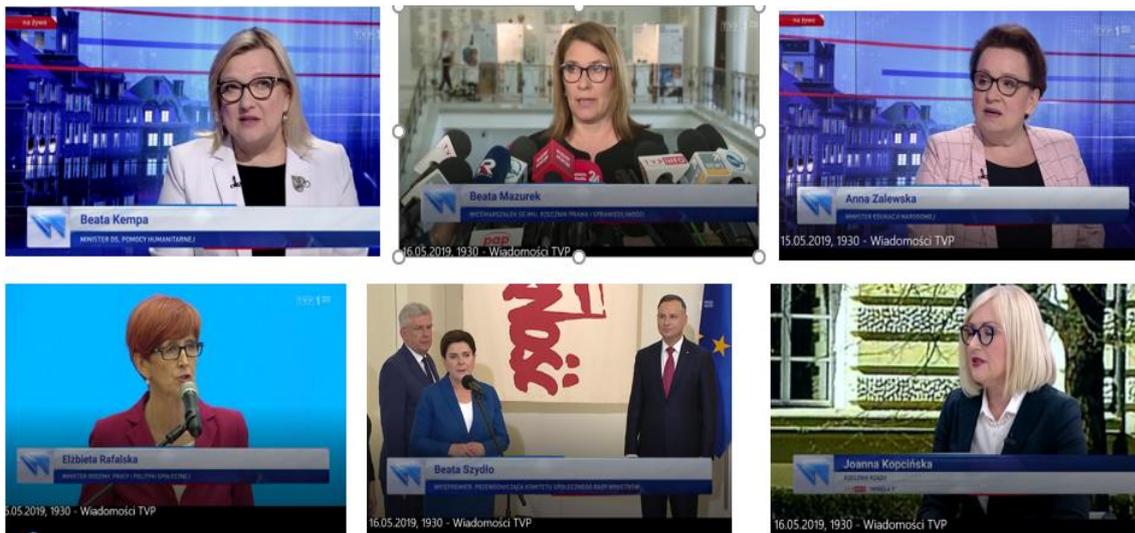
Positive news and opinions for PiS and the government are marked in green. News and opinions negative for the European Coalition are marked red. No colour refers to foreign news (there were only 3 such items) and for neutral information (non-political: weather, soft news, sport etc.).

The news items of positive or negative undertone were arranged in clusters of two, three or more of the same undertone presented one after another. A cluster of 6 news items positive for PiS was broadcast on May 22, clusters of 4 news items negative for European Coalition were broadcast on May 15, 17, 23 and 24. Out of 14 days of monitoring only in 5 cases the first news items positive for PiS were not reinforced by the next ones of the same

undertone. Only 12 news items out of 173 negative for European Coalition were not reinforced by another news item of the same negative undertone.

## 2. Omission of captions introducing politicians as candidates for EP

In pre-election period there is a good practice in electronic media to mark politicians being showed in news and other programmes as “elections candidates”, no matter why they are being shown. “Wiadomości” were not following this good practice. In some reports PiS politicians are marked as „election candidates”, in others not marked. In pictures below from May 16, all of them have no election captions.



## 3. Repeating selected news items on successive days

**LGBT.** A conversation between Rafal Grupinski, one of the leaders of the European Coalition, and two TV reporters pretending to be march’s participants was recorded by a hidden camera. He was shown talking to two supposed sympathisers at a pro-European Coalition demonstration on May 18. They asked him about the coalition’s tactics in coming months on easing gay marriage and adoption of children by same sex couples. Grupinski is heard to say that the Coalition has to be cautious with moving ahead on this front because of the sensitivity of this issue in conservative rural areas and small towns. The item was shown in 7 successive broadcasts of “Wiadomości”.



date	Caption
<b>May 18</b>	Donald Tusk gets involved in Polish domestic politics
<b>May 19</b>	The opposition hides its plans on LGBT rights
<b>May 20</b>	Donald Tusk contravenes EU principles
<b>May 21</b>	LGBT people no longer trust the Civic Platform
<b>May 22</b>	Grupinski is sincere
<b>May 23</b>	The European Coalition is hiding its true intentions
<b>May 24</b>	The Civic Platform is not sincere about bringing in the Euro

**Pedophilia.** “Wiadomości” never directly mentioned a documentary “Don’t tell anyone” produced by Marek and Tomasz Sekielski about priests-pedophiles and their victims with a premier on Youtube on May11. The film had over 20 million viewings on YouTube during the monitoring period. “Wiadomości” restricted its coverage to passing mentions of pedophilia woven into other items. On May 12 they presented a Ministry of Justice table with a category of professions of convicted pedophiles where the largest category constituted people with no training followed by bricklayers and plumbers. No priests were among these groups.

Date	Title
<b>11 maja</b>	Opposition double standards
<b>12 maja</b>	In defense of Christian values
<b>13 maja</b>	Zero tolerance for pedophiles
<b>14 maja</b>	The government intensifies fight against pedophiles
<b>17 maja</b>	Argument of power instead power of argument
<b>15 maja</b>	Government to introduce severe penalties for pedophiles
<b>16 maja</b>	Opposition seeks to delay fight against pedophiles
<b>17 maja</b>	Opposition blocks fight against pedophiles
<b>19 maja</b>	Zero tolerance for pedophiles
<b>21 maja</b>	Zero tolerance for pedophiles
<b>22 maja</b>	Fight against pedophiles continues
<b>24 maja</b>	Three Civil Platform politicians sentenced for pedophilia

**Holocaust and German war crimes compensation.** During the election campaign the far right Konfederacja coalition ran a campaign warning that Jews in the United States claim compensation for their pre-war property which had belonged to Jewish people who had left with no surviving heirs. The US has passed a law numbered 447 which could lead to such a compensation being demanded of Poland by Jewish organisations. In “Wiadomości” the information of 447 bill was linked to Poland’s material losses caused by Germans during World War II.

Date	Title
May 12	NO for claims addressed to Poland
May 13	Rejection of Jewish claims
May 21	Polish NO to undue claims

May 21	Bill for German atrocities
May 23	Will opposition agree to compensate Jewish people?

**The Euro.** During the campaign PiS warned that the opposition allegedly plans to join Euro zone against people's wish and pledged they would never agree to such a move harmful for Polish economy and Poles' wellbeing.

Date	Title
May 16	Despite soaring prices, opposition wants Euro
May 17	Opposition wants Euro against Poles' wishes
May 22	National Bank head says no to Euro
May 23	Germany the main beneficiary of the Euro
May 24	Civic Platform zigzags on the Euro

On May 25, the day before the election, which by electoral law is bind to be free of election campaigning, "Wiadomości" ran an item from Bari in southern Italy which was supposed to suffer economically because of the introduction of Euro. It also reported that 116,000 Poles had left the UK because of Brexit. The guests of "Wiadomości", experts known for sympathy for PiS, discussed whether Poland should introduce Euro currency. As this subject had been used by PiS to attack the opposition during the campaign, it is a moot point whether this was election item on a day when campaign subjects should not be aired.

**Poland's economic successes.** During the electoral campaign "Wiadomości" were broadcasting a number of overviews and news items showing successes of the government economic policy as well as success of state-owned companies.

Date	Title
May 10	100 billion PLN for health care
May 10	Poland leads in EU funds spending
May 11	Poland leads in EU funds spending
May 13	Big investment in infrastructure
May 15	Fast growth of Polish economy
May 20	Poland is attractive for investors
May 21	Investment in Pomerania
May 22	Profits and development
May 24	Differing visions of Poland's development

**Civic Platform.** Almost on each day in the monitoring period "Wiadomości" ran items that criticized the past and present performance of the leading opposition party Civic Platform. There were days when the news programme ran such items twice. The materials regarding the Civic Platform were characterized by the regular use of epithets such as "total opposition", "scandals", "roguery", "betrayal", "unfulfilled promises" and absence of any balancing opinions. The party criticized were not given possibility to refute the attacks. At the same time there was a lack of even modest criticism of PiS .

Date	Title	Explanation
May 10	Mysterious circumstances of Cimoszewicz's traffic accident	Włodzimierz Cimoszewicz, ex-prime minister, was number 1 on the European Coalition slate in Warsaw
May 11	Opposition double standards	Opposition on gay marriages – conversation recorded from hidden camera
May 12	In defense of Christian values	an image of Black Madonna with rainbow halo presented as a crime and attack on Christian values
May 15	Civic Platform policy mistakes and failures	Recalling all accusations against CP
May 17	Will Cimoszewicz resign from running?	Recalling his traffic accident
May 17	All Civic Platform scandals	Recalling all accusations against CP
May 18	Donald Tusk gets involved in Polish domestic politics	Report from opposition march in Warsaw
May 18	Civic Platform betrays its own principles	17th anniversary of CP birth
May 19	Donald Tusk breaks EU norms	Recalling opposition march in Warsaw
May 19	Civic Platform makes empty declarations	Recalling CP foundation statement from 2003
May 20	Unfulfilled Civic Platform promises	Recalling CP foundation statement from 2003
20 May	All Civic Platform scandals	Recalling all accusations against CP
May 23	Is European Coalition hiding its programme?	Archive shots with CP politicians
May 24	Schetyna mocks government aid for flood victims	Recalling lapses and ill-judged statements by opposition politicians during previous floods
May 24	What are they saying about Tusk in Brussels?	Plug of TVP Info programme

#### 4. Using non election items to build support for the ruling party in the election

**13 May**, 4th item “Poland’s frontiers are well guarded”. This items showed PiS successes in maintaining national security and the successes of its security services. It showed Jarosław Zielinski, the deputy minister of the interior and a candidate to the EP. The fact that he is running was not mentioned in the item.

**13 May**, 7th item „Polish aid to war victims” Beata Kempa, the foreign aid minister and a PiS candidate to the EP was shown for 2 minutes plus a further 1 min. 25 sec. as the “Wiadomości” guest. There was no mention that she is a candidate in the election.

**15 May**, 2nd item “The teachers’ strike hurts pupils” showed the results of an opinion poll commissioned by “Wiadomości”. 53 per cent of Poles said that the strike had a negative impact on pupils. This gave “Wiadomości” the opportunity to invite Anna Zalewska, the minister of education, according to the teachers trade union a person responsible for the strike, as “Wiadomości” guest. The fact that she is a candidate to the EP was not mentioned.

**16 May**, 1<sup>st</sup> item “500 PLN a month for each child from July 1” - on expanding the 500 PLN benefit paid for the second and further children in a family to the first one as a part of the government programme announced during electoral campaign. The item showed the president signing the bill and three PiS ministers in charge of the move: Beata Szydło, Elżbieta Rafalska and Joanna Kopińska all running to the EP. None of whom were identified as candidates to the EP.

## 5. Running PiS election materials

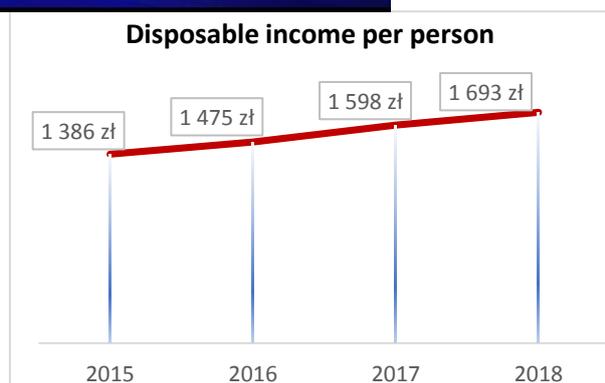
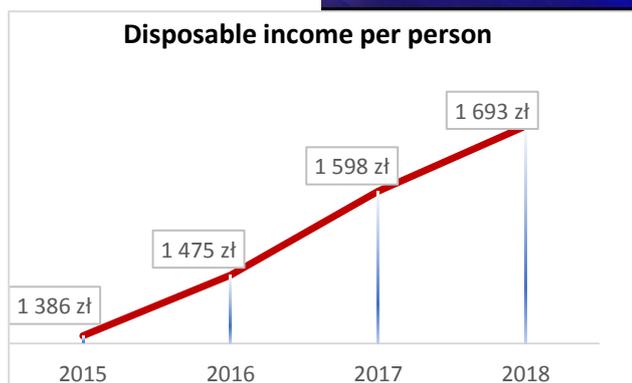
**May 11.** A PiS party convention from Bydgoszcz showed the PiS election pledges table supported by an off screen commentary „the pledges come down to the construction of a just state where its citizens live in solidarity with each other”.



**May 12:** Material on European Coaliton Szczecin’s convention finishes with images coming from an official PiS Twitter account.

## 6. Misleading graphics

**May 14.** “Poles can afford to spend more”. The line of the graph showing per capita disposable income growth rises steeply in the first graph, but growth in fact is much flatter, as shown in the second graph.



## 7. Fake news

**May 24.** „He is scornful of Poland and Poles. Tusk is damaging Poland” says in French a young man introduced as „journalist from Belgium” in a plug for the TVP Info programme, a 24 hours public service news hours channel. Actually, as revealed by independent journalists, Sebastien Meuwissen was an intern in TVP’s second channel. He speaks Polish fluently, works for the Visgerad Post portal and gives Warsaw as his place of residence on his Facebook profile.



## 8. Visual and sound manipulations which favored Law and Justice

Jarosław Kaczyński was invariably shown in wide lense shots being applauded as he entered and left meetings. Whereas whenever Grzegorz Schetyna, his opponent was shown, there was scant or muted applause or enthusiasm shown. Visuals of the opposition leader are often badly lit and close up. “Wiadomości” exposed lapses, facial grimaces and ill-judged gestures made by politicians of opposition parties.

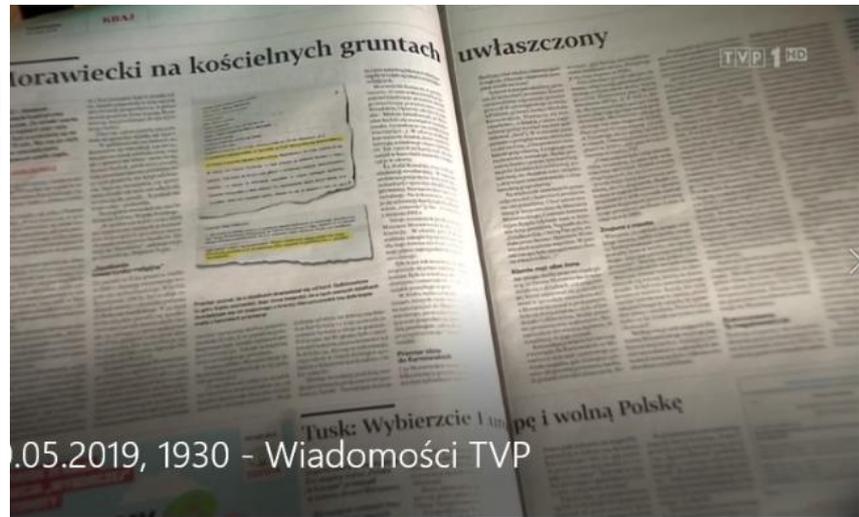


## 9. News which showed PiS in a bad light was left out

**May 20**, 3rd item: “Gazeta Wyborcza political attack”. The front page headline in the newspaper is not shown. The story, which reports business deal of the PiS prime minister who purchased land cheaply from the Catholic Church in the 1990s with huge profit, is shown on an inside page, where the headlines are smaller. The item includes a quote from the prime minister’s lawyer, there is no comment from the authors of the piece of the opposition, what is actually a rule in any item which refers to PiS.

“Wiadomości” did not inform on the report of the National Chamber of Audits (NIK) which criticised the school reform carried out by minister Anna Zalewska, PiS candidate to the EP or about two critical biographies of the prime minister published during the campaign.

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#### 10. Edition of “Wiadomości” on the last day of the election campaign, Friday, May 24

This was the day when “Wiadomości” lasted for almost 45 minutes, 15 minutes longer than the regular half an hour. The three quarters of an hour included 12 minutes devoted exclusively to Jarosław Kaczyński, the PiS leader. There were 16 items of which 11 referred to the elections and these took up 86 per cent of air time. The head of PiS appeared in three items. He spoke in the news for a total of 9 minutes and 13 seconds. Most of the issues covered that day were a re-run of the themes which had been propagated during the previous two weeks. The first four items concentrated on the floods which struck Poland during the last few days of the campaign. The last of the flood items criticized the opposition leaders for their remark that PiS politicians had posed with flood victims to build their support for their campaign.



A TVP camera caught Grzegorz Schetyna, the opposition leader, taking a bun which from a basket for flood victims. The lapses and ill-judged statements by opposition politicians during previous floods, some as remote as 1997, were quoted.

A headline saying „three Civic Platform politicians sentenced for pedophilia” was followed by a report from the Senate where Zbigniew Ziobro, the justice minister, was shown arguing for changes to the penal code which aimed to raise prison sentences for pedophilia crime. Once again “Wiadomości” ran a film clip showing Daniel Cohn Bendit praising pedophilia 4 decades ago and his current meetings with Polish opposition politicians.

„The Civic Platform fails to give a clear answer as to its position on the euro” ran the headline as a candidate from the opposition European Coalition dithered in response to questions on the euro in a TVP debate the previous day. As on most previous editions on the news Rafał Grupański from the Civic Platform recorded from hidden camera while revealing his party’s strategy on furthering LGBT freedoms was shown.

„Konfederacja” - the far right nationalist alliance which PiS saw as seriously eroding its vote - was shown to be thanking its allies abroad. The “Wiadomości” anchor quoted Jarosław Kaczyński saying that there will be no coalition between PiS and Konfederacja because it is a pro-Russian party. The next item was on the new internet copyright law an issue which triggered young people and Konfederacja’s voter discontent. The item informs viewers that the government will be appealing against the new law to the European Union Court of Justice in Luxembourg.

The last item spoke of ‘differing visions of Poland’s development”. It informed viewers that all of Poland’s 8 million old age pensioners had received an extra pension payment worth 888 PLN in the month before the poll promised by the leader of PiS at the beginning of the campaign to the EP. On top of that “Wiadomości” inform that unemployment is falling and the economy is growing.

Finally, there is an interview with „Wiadomości” guest Jarosław Kaczyński. The questions by the anchor follow the pattern of the last two weeks of the PiS campaign: the floods, the euro, gay marriage, Jewish property claims, 80 billion PLN to be spent on PiS social programmes, economic development. None of the questions challenge the interviewed. To one of them the leader of the ruling part replies “I think I have just answered that ”. At the end of the conversation he praises the anchor (known as his favourite) who had excused herself for her soar throat “You made it, you really made it”.



## 11. Conclusions

The monitoring of “Wiadomości” TVP conducted from May 10-24 demonstrated that the main public TV news programme failed to observe during the electoral campaign the conditions of article 21.1 of Poland’s Law on radio and tv which requires public service television to be „pluralistic, unbiased and independent”.

Qualitative and quantitative analysis of “Wiadomości” indicates that the programme ran content which favoured the ruling party and omitted, downplayed, ridiculed or vilified the opposition parties candidates and politicians by the use i.a. of fake news, picture and sound manipulations.

Monitoring findings, such as the massive disproportion in time devoted to the different parties by „Wiadomości” and the one sided presentation of party candidates allows us to conclude that “Wiadomości” not only failed to fulfill the legal requirements of impartiality, balance, pluralism and independence, but also ran and exposed the ruling party propaganda materials which constitutes a violation of the Electoral law. The agitation for the particular electoral committee is reserved for election committees and should be paid for and included in election expenses which are limited by law.

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Monitoring of „Wiadomości” was conducted by the team of observers from Journalist Society [Towarzystwo Dziennikarskie] led by Andrzej Krajewski, the head of the monitoring team, with the support and cooperation of Stefan Batory Foundation. The methodology of the monitoring was developed with the support of Wojciech Mazowiecki, Stefan Batory Foundation’s expert. The results of the observations were distributed twice during the monitoring: on May 17<sup>th</sup> - on the first week of monitoring and on May 24<sup>th</sup> - on the second week. The final report is published on: [www.towarzystwodziennikarskie.pl](http://www.towarzystwodziennikarskie.pl) and [www.batory.org.pl](http://www.batory.org.pl)

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