

**International radio broadcasting – a case of Radio  
Poland – an external service of Polish public radio**

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**Abstract:**

Since its beginning radio has also been used as an instrument of international communication. Broadcast stations sending messages abroad began to appear shortly after the first wireless transmissions were successfully performed with the use of the Morse code. The discovery of radio waves enabled sending information on long distances without wire. This invention gave the new possibilities to communicate between continents, from ships to shores and back, or between military troupes during wartime. International broadcasting was also used to communicate with allies and with enemies during military conflicts. At that time an ability to transmit voice using radio waves had already been developed, then radio transmissions entered the dimension of entertainment as well as political communication with citizens and foreigners. The international voice broadcasting service has been developed from 1927 with the purpose of keeping the citizens in touch with the mother countries and also of helping the governments to disseminate its culture throughout the world. In this context the article is an analysis of the legal basis, purposes, directions and technical aspects of broadcasting, and organisational structure of the Radio Poland (former Polish Radio External Service).

**Key words:**

international broadcasting, radio broadcasting, Radio Poland, Polish Radio External Service, short waves

***The aims of the study and methodology***

The activity of Polish Radio External Service, now operating under the name Radio Poland, has not been described in any separate chapter so far, neither in any separate monograph or scientific article. Only Maciej Józef Kwiatkowski, the radio historian, on several pages in his monograph "Tu Polskie Radio Warszawa" (1980) describes the uprising and the first years

(1936-1939) of the activity of Polish Radio External Service. Also Stanisław Mischczak (1971) in his monograph in the 1970s mentioned a reactivation of the Polish Radio External Service after the Second World War. Later, activity of this radio has not been subjected to scientific analysis.

Abroad, international radio broadcasting, despite the dominance of television, is constantly being researched. That is why I considered it necessary to fill the gap in research on the Radio Poland. The general aim of the article is exploration and description of the studied issue as a prelude to further, in-depth studies. My goal, in particular, is to show how the Radio Poland carries out tasks related to ensuring communication with Poles staying abroad and informing foreign listeners about matters of Poland and Poles. I am also interested how it adapts the editorial structure and directions of broadcasting to these tasks.

The author used research methods and techniques involving critical analysis of documents, analysis of the organizational structure of the radio, as well as initial qualitative analysis of the radio programmes. The Polish Radio Timeline available on the Internet was helpful in establishing historical facts in the period after World War II until now. In addition, the information posted on the websites of Polish Radio External Service/Radio Poland, articles and information published in magazines and media industry portals, as well as the reports of the National Broadcasting Council and public documents of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs were taken into consideration.

### ***Development of (international) broadcasting***

The desire of messaging beyond the borders of one's own country is the basis of radio broadcasting. It pushed inventors to the initial and subsequent attempts to transmit electromagnetic waves, which could reach across the ocean to distant places and people. They did not immediately recognize the nature of radio waves and their physical properties which were discovered gradually, along with successive transmissions. The solutions used in telegraphy were originally used with long waves achieved by means of very high power transmitters. Long waves guarantee immunity to magnetic interference and are characterized by stable signal regardless of weather conditions and physical obstacles during transmission. The high power transmitters enabled sending signals over a distance of 8000 km. Such devices required large space and installation of sufficiently large masts and antenna systems which generated high costs of transmission (Nahin 2001). Radio amateurs were interested in radio transmissions but, unlike

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an increasing number of commercial broadcasters, they did not have significant financial resources, so they drew their attention to short waves, which had been discovered and regularly tested since 1918. It is worth mentioning that the first radio transmission attempts were performed with the use of short waves by Guglielmo Marconi during the years 1896-1901, but then it was believed that long waves are more useful (Baker 1972: 216). Marconi came back to short waves during World War I when, in 1916, Italian Navy reported the demand for radio waves to be used in a strategic short sea communication. G. Marconi and his colleague C.S. Franklin developed a system of transmitting waves of two meters and at the end of the war C.S. Franklin set up a connection on the wavelength of 15 meters through which a message was sent from London to Birmingham (Baker 1972: 217).

Radio amateurs from the US and such European countries as France, Great Britain, Poland, Germany, Czechoslovakia and Hungary – organized a joint experiment of broadcasting on shortwave, under the auspices of the association of The American Radio Relay League (ARRL). Testing the possibilities of short wavelength of 200 m generated by means of low power initially consisted in the fact that the experts of the association travelled to Europe with the equipment and attempted to receive programmes broadcast by radio amateurs from the US. During the first of its kind attempt in December 1921 they received 30 programmes, during the next – a year later – as many as 315. The next step was to obtain a bilateral liaison, which was achieved in 1923 when two American radio enthusiasts joined for a few hours with two amateur radio stations in France. A month later, the experiment was repeated with stations in the UK (Wood 1994: 22). In the same year G. Marconi conducted short-wave tests from his ship "Elettra" by sending a signal at night at a distance of over 4025 km and during the day at approximately 2254 km (Berg 2013). In 1924 a British sixteen-year-old student exchanged signals via the short wave from New Zealand (Wood 1994: 23). The short wave (as well as the ultra-short) became even more interesting after 1925 – when the French explorer André Clavier conducted a radio transmission across the English Channel using a wavelength of only 18 metres (Orłowski, Płochocki & Przyrowski 1979: 296).

Finally, many experiments revealed that the use of short waves [of 200 m (100 m now) to 10 m] in combination with low-power transmitter and small masts and antenna systems enables sending information which can be heard over many thousands of miles away. The secret is the ionosphere – a layer of the earth's atmosphere from which shortwave signals bounce off,

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rebouncing back to Earth hundreds or thousands of miles away from their point of origin. The advantages of using a low-power short wave transmitter include low costs associated with low-power, less space for short wave installations (masts, antenna systems, alternators), and an increasing number of amateur broadcasters. However, short waves exhibit some inconveniences: fading, unreliability of communication and loss of signal from time to time. Short waves can be useful in domestic communication, mainly in territorially vast countries such as the US, or in international communication, as it has been used mostly by European countries.

Broadcast stations sending messages abroad began to appear shortly after the first wireless transmissions were successfully performed with the use of the Morse code. The pioneering one was a broadcasting station established in 1906 in Nauen (Germany). This station was treated as a wireless telegraph and messages were transmitted to make connections with the German colonies in Africa (Fortner 1993: 90). The second was The Company “Radio-France” established in 1921 in Sainte-Assise (France) which in exchange for a license to broadcast overseas had an obligation to support the transfer of correspondence of the French officials to the overseas territories (Griset 1983: 90). The discovery of radio waves gave the new possibilities to communicate between continents, from ships to shores and back, or between military troupes during wartime. International broadcasting was also used to communicate with allies and with enemies during military conflicts. The one of the earliest international voice broadcasting service was the BBC Empire Service (now BBC World Service), which began experimental broadcasting in 1927 with the purpose of keeping Britain’s colonial civil officials in touch with the mother country and also of helping the government to disseminate the British culture throughout the world. In fact, the British economic interests were developed on a large scale, therefore good public relations with contractors and residents of foreign countries were of utmost importance (Mansell 1982). The next external services were Radio Moscow (1929) carrying propaganda broadcasts in German, English and French and concentrating its efforts on promoting the communist ideology (Miszczak 1971: 268); then French Radio Le Poste Colonial (1931) (Duval 1979: 252), a predecessor of Radio France International, linking France with its colonial possessions; and finally – Radio Bari from Italy (1934) the first regular international station broadcasting in Arabic language established because of Italian interests in Africa (Scales 2016: 259); and many other (Wood 1994).

*International broadcasting of Polish Radio*

The beginnings of Polish radio broadcasting are dated after World War I when in November 1918 the officers of Polish Army intercepted the “WAR” German military radio station located in Warsaw and broadcast a statement about the independence of Poland. Firstly, the “WAR” radio station was used by the new Polish state for both military communication and foreign connections with other countries. After the Polish Parliament had legislated the Post, Telegraph and Telephony Act to develop wireless communication in the country, in 1925 a broadcasting company named Polish Radio received a first radio license in Poland (Grzelewska 2001). As a result of World War I a large area of the former territory of Poland with its inhabitants was left outside the new borders, mainly in Eastern Europe, but previously many Poles had emigrated to the United States for economic purposes. Therefore, in 1936 the management of Polish Radio decided to establish Polish Radio External Service to guarantee communication with Polish citizens living abroad (Kwiatkowski 1980: 356). Polish Radio External Service stopped broadcasting during World War II, when the Nazi Germans took over Polish broadcasting stations, destroying them or using for their own radio productions of propaganda nature. Polish Radio External Service resumed its activity in 1945 after the war. In the 1950s (1956) broadcasting in multiple languages began: English, Danish, Greek, Finnish, French, Spanish, German, Russian, Turkish and Italian (Miszczak 1971). It can be assumed that the choice of languages was due to two reasons: first, they wanted to keep a connection with Poles abroad, and, second, the radio served communist propaganda purposes – programmes in Western languages also reached the Western listeners enabling the dissemination of communist ideology.

In 1990, after the political transformation, Polish Radio External Service – renamed as Radio Polonia – changed the scope of the programme, abandoning broadcasts in French, Spanish, Arabic and Scandinavian languages and started broadcasting mainly for Poles in the East and South of Poland, forming additional programmes in Lithuanian, Belarusian, Ukrainian, Czech and Slovakian (*85 lat Polskiego Radia*). After the shift of the political system foreign policy goals were changed as well – there was no longer any need to disseminate information based on communist propaganda in Western languages. Since then, the main recipients of radio programmes were Poles scattered around the world. The programmes started to be broadcast to new states which regained independence after the collapse of the Soviet Union, such as

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Lithuania, Latvia, Ukraine, Belarus and Estonia. Later, in 1994, Polish Radio External Service began broadcasting via World Radio Network (WRN), the provider of the radio programmes from the leading international public broadcasters and independent producers from all continents (*World Radio Network*).

Multiple historic and current circumstances led Polish people to emigrate to every corner of the world. The main emigration movements took place in several waves, such as:

- political refugees in the mid-nineteenth century after the uprisings for independence against invaders from the Russian Empire, the Kingdom of Prussia and Habsburg Austria – the main directions of their emigration were France, Great Britain, Switzerland, Germany and North America.
- economic emigration from the mid-nineteenth century to 1939 – mainly to France, Belgium, Germany, the United States of America, Canada, Brazil, Argentina.
- emigration during World War II due to Nazi repressions and after the war for political reasons – as opposition to the new communist regime.
- political emigration because of martial law and political repression imposed by the Communists and the economic emigration caused by the economic crisis in the 1980s.
- economic emigration after 1989 and emigration for work after Polish accession to the European Union in 2004.

As a consequence, as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs estimates, about 18 million Poles and people of Polish origin live abroad in different countries, most of them in the United States, but also in Canada, Argentina, Brazil, Australia, South Africa, Western Europe (mostly in Germany, France, Great Britain, Ireland, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Iceland, Holland, Belgium, etc.) and Eastern Europe (mostly in Belarus, Ukraine, Lithuania, Latvia, Russia, Kazakhstan) (*MSZ: ponad 18 milionów...*).

Currently, the tasks of Polish Radio, which are implemented by Polish Radio External Service – now renamed as Radio Poland – and other antennas including television, are laid down in Article 21, section 1 of the Act on Radio and Television (*Dz. U. 2004, No. 253, item. 2531*). The document states, that public radio should, inter alia:

- create and diffuse nation-wide programmes, regional programmes, programmes for audiences abroad in Polish language and in other languages, and other programmes catering for democratic, social and cultural needs of communities;

- pay attention to the needs of national and ethnic minorities and communities using regional languages, which include emission of information programmes in languages of national and ethnic minorities and in regional languages;
- and also create educational programmes and render them accessible to Polish people living abroad.

The points of the law mentioned above are the basis of activities of Radio Poland which broadcasts in six languages: Polish, English, German, Belarusian, Russian and Ukrainian. Radio Poland, as we could read on its website, is focused on broadcasting “the programmes on developments in Poland, Polish foreign policy, economy, business and foreign investments. Polish Radio provides objective and impartial information about Poland and its stance on international affairs. It reports on developments in Polish society, its daily life as well as scientific and cultural achievements” (*Radio Poland, About Us*).

Radio Poland, as part of the public media, is financed from subscription fees and subsidies from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In recent years, funding has decreased, as shown in the table below.

**Table 1.** The costs of creating and distributing programmes of Radio Poland from 2010 to 2017 (in million zlotys).

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Year	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
The costs of creating and distributing programmes	22,0	21,8	14,5	17,7	15,0	14,9	14,8	13,6

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Source: own preparation based on the reports of the National Broadcasting Council ([KRRiT 2016A](#), [2016B](#), [2017A](#), [2017B](#), [2018A](#), [2018B](#)).

Radio Poland is divided into several sections devoted to editing broadcasts. These are: Belarusian Section, English Section, German Section, Lithuanian Section, Polish Section, Russian Section and Ukrainian Section. The broadcasts of all sections contain information on domestic affairs, foreign affairs, political events and business, sport and cultural topics as well as Polish music. But the content of each section in particular programmes and on the websites varies depending on a target group of Polish and foreign listeners. All sections – with the exception of the English Section – transmit programmes in Eastern languages 24 hours a day via the web radio called “Eastern Channel”. Each section puts its own news and content in Eastern

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Channel. Some elements of daily programme are the same for all sections but they are broadcast in different languages. The English Section, for instance, transmits online via “English Channel”. Radio transmission and all its content are also available through the Polish Radio application installed on mobile devices and, of course, are transmitted on the air. The English Section creates website [thenews.pl](http://thenews.pl) with current news, video content and radio podcasts.

The Polish Section of Radio Poland disseminates broadcasts primarily to the Poles living in Eastern Europe – mainly in Lithuania, Ukraine and Belarus. For daily radio broadcasting Polish Section uses an airtime provided by local radio stations to emit half-hour broadcasts in Polish language. Broadcasts are emitted daily on the air of the “Radio znad Wilii”<sup>1</sup> at a frequency of 103,8 FM (from Vilnius, Lithuania) at 16.30 and 21.00 UTC, and on the Radio “Niezależnist” (Радіо “Незалежність” – Radio “Independence”; from Lviv, Ukraine) generally broadcast in Ukrainian language at a frequency of 106,7 FM at 18.30 UTC. All Polish programmes include news services from Poland and the rest of the world. Selected programmes referring to politics, economy and culture are rebroadcasted from national channels of Polish Radio during these emissions. Additionally, on Saturdays the programmes contain features and radio documentaries. Furthermore, on Sundays religious programmes, including the Catholic mass retransmissions from one of the Polish churches, are issued on the air. All programmes mentioned above disseminate mostly Polish music performed by Polish artists. The Polish Section of Radio Poland maintains the website with news texts and audio-video content, it shares podcasts of the programmes and provides an archive of the recent productions. The programmes of the Polish Section are also available via HOT BIRD satellite in daily transmission at 16.30 and 21.00 UTC.

The Belarusian Section of Radio Poland began broadcasting on the 13<sup>th</sup> January 1992, but earlier, from the 15<sup>th</sup> December 1991, its broadcasts had been transmitted within the content of the Polish Section. Since its beginnings, the purpose of the Belarusian Section was to inform Belarusian listeners about various aspects of Polish citizens’ life, about the relationship between Belarus and Poland, and about the situation of minorities – the Belarusian in Poland and the Polish in Belarus. The idea was to provide reliable information which would develop the knowledge about Poland among Belarusians and contribute to enhancing mutual understanding. As a result of political change in Belarus, when the state began to move away from democratic

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<sup>1</sup> Radio znad Wilii (“Radio from the Neris”) has been established by Polish minority in Lithuania.



reforms by introducing information blockade and strengthening its connection with Russia, the Belarusian Section undertook a task to inform international public opinion about activities of political power in Belarus. The Belarusian Section established cooperation with an editorial staff of national minorities programmes which was preparing broadcasts for the Belarusian minority at Radio Bialystok, a regional station of Polish Radio. In addition, it cooperated with Belarusian radio stations, including “Belaruska maladiozna” (“Беларуская маладзёжная” – Radio “Belarussian Youth”), the main youth radio station from Belarus, which existed from 1963 – within the former Soviet Union – to 1994 – within The Republic of Belarus (*45 задаў..., Zakryivaetstva...*). After the Radio “Belaruska maladiozna” had been closed in 1996, the Belarusian Section broadcast its daily half-hour service via the first private Belarusian radio at 101,2 FM. In 1999 a new radio for Belarusian minority in Poland called Radio “Racyja”<sup>2</sup> was established in Bialystok and it started rebroadcasting programmes of the Belarusian Section on its waves. In the period from June to November 2015 listenership of Radio “Racyja” was estimated to be 0,2 percent<sup>3</sup> (Radio Track). The Belarusian Section programmes are also available by Eutelsat Hot Bird and Astra satellites, 24 hours a day online and as podcasts on its website radyjo.net. It is possible to listen to broadcasts on the air in Belarus on medium waves on 1386 kHz (“Baltic Waves”) at 7.00 am (of the local time), also as transmissions from the earlier mentioned Lithuanian “Radio znad Wili” at 103,8 FM at 00.30 am and 6.00 am (local time). In some areas its signal is transmitted to Belarus by digital transmitters DAB + and can be received through digital receivers.

The Ukrainian Section of Polish Radio External Service (Radio Poland) was established in 1990. It can be reached on the Radio “Era FM” (Радио “ЕРА ФМ”, from Kiev, Ukraine) offering two ten-minute broadcasts at 12.20 and at 11.47 pm and one thirty-minute production at 7.30 pm (local time) aired daily. Its programmes consist of information about Poland and the European Union, they present European views on global and regional issues, show an image of Polish society and its achievements in science and culture. Broadcasts provide news, reviews of Polish press, economic services, features prepared by Polish Radio reporters, Polish and

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<sup>2</sup>Radio “Racyja” (Radio “the Right”) opposes President Alaksandr Lukashenka’s regime and it is broadcast to Belarus from Bialystok in Poland. The radio was formed in 1999 and broadcast until 2002 when it was closed due to the lack of funding. In 2006 it was reactivated by several of its former journalists and it is funded, among others, by both the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Digital Affairs.

<sup>3</sup> Radio Track Millward Brown SMG KRC, research sample of 857 respondents in the city of Bialystok, for the period from June to November 2015.

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European specialists' comments, interviews and discussions, and also journalistic materials about culture<sup>4</sup> (*Radio "Era" for Polish Radio*). The programmes of the Ukrainian Section are also transmitted by Astra satellite and on medium waves on 1395 kHz (214 metres) at 21.30 (Ukrainian time) in the Eastern Ukraine and Crimea. Residents of western Ukraine may receive programmes from Radio Rzeszow (a regional channel of Polish Radio), in which the Ukrainian Section gives a half-hour broadcast called "News for Ukrainians" at 2.05 (Kyiv time) at night. The Ukrainian Section offers podcasts and prepares productions in Ukrainian language for the "Eastern Channel" web radio.

The Russian Section of Polish Radio External Service has the same objectives and principles of creating programmes as the sections described previously. Broadcasts are diffused by satellite and via Eastern Channel on the Internet. Listeners from the east of Ukraine, from Crimea and Moldova as well as from the Caucasus can listen to the radio on a frequency of 1395 kHz from 21.30 to 22.30 (Moscow time). The waves reach up to Israel and Cyprus. In the western part of Russia, in particular in the Kaliningrad region, as well as in Baltic States and Belarus half-hour programmes are transmitted on medium waves on a frequency of 1386 kHz at 18.30 in Kaliningrad (local time) and at 19.30 of local time in western Russia, Belarus and Ukraine. Transmissions of the Russian Section can be reached via the World Radio Network on a frequency of 700 kHz in Moscow and in the Moscow district in several programme blocks at 17.00, 20.00, 21.00, 00.30, 05.00, 09.00, 12.30 of local time. Programmes of the Russian Section are partially rebroadcasted by Radio Svoboda (Radio Free Europe for Russia).

The English Section radio programme for foreign countries is the most comprehensive service and, according to the guidelines of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, it should play a key role in informing Poles living abroad and foreigners about events in Poland and it should reflect Polish attitude to foreign affairs. The English Section provides more universal content, – in contrast to the services for residents of Eastern Europe which are concentrated on interests of the Poles living in Lithuania, Belarus or Ukraine. It refers to events important to all Polish citizens, wherever they live.

The English Section offers the most comprehensive transmission system – its programmes are available online via "English Channel" and are broadcast partially in the United Kingdom on spectrum DAB in London at 19.00-20.00 of local time and in Ireland by its DAB

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<sup>4</sup> The programme "Radio «Era» for Polish Radio" have been analyzed by Author.

radio network RTE Radio 1 Extra in Dublin, Cork, Limerick and in the Dundalk/Drogheda district. The English Section transmits to the USA through World Radio Network and as a result its programmes can be received in some areas of several states such as Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Louisiana, Minnesota, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Texas, Utah, Washington, Wisconsin and Virginia. Radio Poland is also broadcast via satellites in Europe, North America, Africa, Asia and Australia and is transmitted via cable TV in Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Germany, Holland, Ireland and Switzerland as well as in the USA.

The German Section – is the smallest of the Radio's editorial offices and broadcast information services three times a day, at 8.00, 13.00 and 19.30 on the general channel of Radio Poland. He also runs website providing current information on Polish and German matters.

### *Summary*

A characteristic feature of Polish international broadcasting is the lack of information on international affairs, unless they are associated with the Polish state or people. The most spectacular events of the world – such as terrorist attacks, disasters or accidents – are discussed, but ordinary foreign matters are mostly skipped. This issue would require in-depth quantitative and qualitative research.

The future of Radio Poland is difficult to predict. The only research conducted among Poles in Ukraine a few years ago – in 2010 – showed that only 0.1% of them listen to Radio Poland with the reference to the period of one year, a weekly listenership was estimated as zero (*Prawie zerowa...* 2011). The awareness of a possibility of listening to Radio Poland declared 4.3 percent of the respondents. This prompted Polish authorities to change the forms of broadcasting in Ukraine. However, neither Polish Radio nor Polish governments conduct regular surveys devoted to listenership of Radio Poland abroad, therefore it is difficult to assess whether anybody listens to it and who it is. In recent years the budget of Radio Poland was reduced, its editorial board was reorganized, and some journalists were dismissed. All due to insufficient incomes from the licence fee for public media and cutting off the funds for Radio Poland from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (*Report of the meeting...* 2014).

In times of easy access to information through new media and mobile applications, the demand for news delivered by the Polish broadcaster may appear smaller than in the years 1945-1989, until the fall of the communist regime in Poland and in Central and Eastern Europe. But

we must remember that modern technologies are not readily available in all corners of the world. In less urbanized areas where economy is poorly developed, traditional radio being broadcast by radio waves is the only chance to allow people to keep in touch with the world and with their country of origin. Radio waves are also the best solution where undemocratic governments restrict citizens' access to reliable and independent information. International broadcasting in such situations still remains the best option.

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