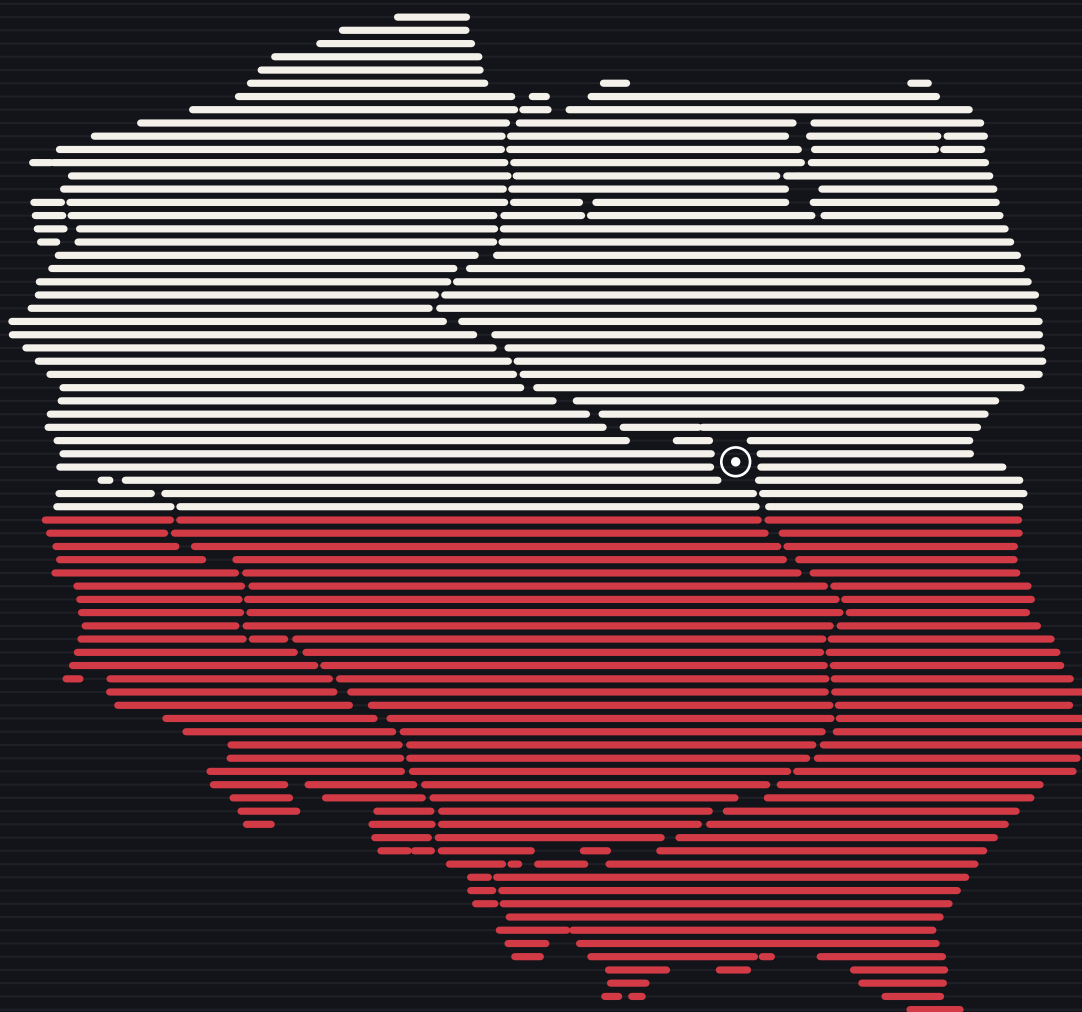


MEDIA CAPTURE MONITORING REPORT

2026

Poland



*Measuring compliance with the
European Media Freedom Act (EMFA)*

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**MEDIA FREEDOM
RAPID RESPONSE**

An annual measure of media capture in the EU, and of how far Member States meet the standards the European Media Freedom Act sets against it.

The **Media Capture Monitoring Report (MCMR)** is produced by the International Press Institute (IPI) and the Media and Journalism Research Center (MJRC). Each country report assesses the four safeguards in the European Media Freedom Act (EMFA) that bear most directly on media capture: the independence of public service media, the independence of media regulators, protection against the misuse of state funds to influence the media, and transparency of media ownership and safeguards for media pluralism.

The 2026 edition follows the EMFA's first year of full application, from 8 August 2025. Written by national experts and edited by MJRC and IPI, the reports are deliberately short: they track what has changed since the 2025 baseline assessment and identify the problems that remain.

The project is part of the **Media Freedom Rapid Response (MFRR)**, a Europe-wide mechanism which tracks, monitors and responds to violations of press and media freedom in EU Member States and Candidate Countries. It is co-funded by the European Commission.

This report covers developments up to October 2026.

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YEAR

2026

READ THE BASELINE

Media Capture Monitoring Report: Poland 2025

journalismresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/Poland-2025-V2.pdf

ipi.media/publications/poland-media-capture-and-emfa-monitoring-report-2025/

As of October 2026, Poland has not yet adopted the new media law that would align it with the European Media Freedom Act (EMFA), despite the development of media reform legislation by the government. The challenges identified in previous reports remain unresolved: the independence of the media regulator, the politicisation of public service media, politically dependent state financing and insufficient safeguards for media pluralism, all against a background of high socio-political and media polarisation. The government's draft media law (UC130), introduced in December 2025, would reshape the regulator, KRRiT, return the appointment of public media boards to it, and replace the licence fee with state-budget funding. But the draft has yet to reach Parliament, held up by a dispute over its cost; the regulator itself has criticised it, and a president from the opposition camp has vetoed several other government bills.

Public service media remain in liquidation under liquidators appointed by the Minister of Culture, a legal status introduced by the incoming government in December 2023 as part of its restructuring of public media following eight years of rule by the government created by the Law and Justice (PiS) party. While this decision was intended to facilitate organisational changes and safeguard their operations, its legal basis remains contested¹. Meanwhile, Polska Press, one of Poland's largest regional newspaper publishers, remains owned by the state-controlled energy company Orlen (formerly PKN Orlen), acquired by the state in 2021 under the PiS government. As a result of political deadlock, media freedom progress in Poland remains in limbo and media capture remains engrained, despite clear political will for reform.

THE YEAR IN BRIEF

DEC 2025	The government publishes its draft media law, UC130, for consultation. It would reshape the regulator, KRRiT, and the governance and funding of public service media.
JAN 2026	The consultation closes on 23 January. IPI and media freedom partners call the draft a positive but incomplete step towards EMFA alignment.
APR 2026	The Ombudsperson questions whether the draft's safeguards would secure KRRiT's independence.
JUN 2026	The President signs the anti-SLAPP law.
JUL 2026	The target of passing the media law before the summer recess is missed.
OCT 2026	The draft has still not reached the Sejm, held up by a dispute between the finance and culture ministries over PLN 2.5 billion a year for public media.
FALL 2027	Parliamentary elections are due.

1. See the previous Media Capture Report for Poland; also: Głowacki, M. (2024). Public service, no deliberation, ORF Public Value Report – TEXTE 28: Public Service Media in Europe: 37-41.

01

EMFA compliance since the 2025 report

The media law's timetable

- Dec 2025
draft published for consultation
- 23 Jan 2026
consultation closes
- Spring 2026
first target for the Sejm
- Late Jul 2026
revised target, before the summer recess

October 2026 **Not yet in the Sejm**

Proposed public media funding

2.5bn

PLN A YEAR FROM THE STATE BUDGET

Would replace the licence fee under UC130. A dispute between the finance and culture ministries over the cost has held up the draft.

On the surface, one of the most critical developments was the government's draft media law (UC130), introduced for consultation in early December 2025 and then subject to public consultation until January 23, 2026². In a submission to the public consultation, IPI with media freedom partners assessed that the draft act to amend the Broadcasting and Television Act overall represented a positive but incomplete initiative to reform Polish media legislation in line with EMFA³. The timetable for passing the law through the Sejm (the lower chamber of Poland's parliament) has shifted several times, from spring 2026 to later announcements suggesting that the new regulations would be processed before the parliamentary summer recess in late July 2026.⁴

By October 2026, however, the draft had still not been sent to the Sejm: it remained with the government's Standing Committee of the Council of Ministers, amid a dispute between the finance and culture ministries over the proposed PLN 2.5 billion a year in state funding for public media.⁵

The EMFA and media regulation remain contested political issues in the broader conflict between the governing centre-left coalition and the conservative opposition, with the President of the Republic representing the latter camp and using his veto power on several government legislative initiatives. However, in June 2026 the President signed the law introducing strong protections against Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation (SLAPPs), providing some hope for reform⁶. Political tensions are particularly relevant when considering the response of the media regulator (Krajowa Rada Radiofonii i Telewizji, KRRiT) to the draft media law. In fact, the KRRiT has argued that some of the proposed changes could weaken rather than strengthen its independence and that the draft does not fully address certain requirements arising from the EMFA⁷. Given that both the media

2. *Projekt ustawy o zmianie ustawy o radiofonii i telewizji oraz niektórych innych ustaw*, www.gov.pl/web/premier/projekt-ustawy-o-zmianie-ustawy-o-radiofonii-i-telewizji-oraz-niektorych-innych-ustaw, [accessed: October 16, 2026].
3. *The International Press Institute*, Poland: Opinion on draft reform of broadcasting law and EMFA implementation, ipi.media/poland-opinion-on-emfa-reform-of-broadcasting-law/, [accessed: October 12, 2026].
4. *Nowa ustawa medialna pod koniec lipca na biurku prezydenta Karola Nawrockiego*, www.press.pl/tresc/93598,nowa-ustawa-medialna-pod-koniec-lipca-na-biurku-prezydenta-karola-nawrockiego [accessed: September 21, 2026].
5. Lis, M. (2026, September 8). "Ustawa medialna utknęła. Ministerstwa spierają się o 2,5 mld zł na media publiczne" [The media law is stuck: ministries argue over PLN 2.5 billion for public media]. *Wirtualnemedialna.pl*. www.wirtualnemedialna.pl/ustawa-medialna-utknela-ministerstwa-spieraja-sie-o-2-5-mld-zl-na-media-publiczne,732473011924320a, [accessed: October 16, 2026].
6. *The International Press Institute*, Poland: Passing of Anti-SLAPP Act a victory for media freedom, ipi.media/poland-passing-of-anti-slapp-act-a-victory-for-media-freedom/, [accessed: October 12, 2026].
7. *Krajowa Rada Radiofonii i Telewizji*: Krytyczne uwagi KRRiT do projektu tzw. ustawy medialnej [KRRiT's critical comments on the so-called media law], www.gov.pl/web/krrit/krytyczne-uwagi-krrit-do-projektu-tzw-ustawy-medialnej, [accessed: October 11, 2026].

regulator and the public service media in liquidation remain at the centre of a broader institutional and political conflict, the media capture assessments should be considered in the context of the respective actors and their interests.

The most significant development under the proposed law concerns the introduction of regulatory mechanisms to support KRRiT's independence, something that has never fully been made a reality. The new draft seeks to address longstanding concerns over political influence by modifying KRRiT's composition, appointments and terms. Proposed changes include, for example, rotational membership mechanisms, more detailed professional and independence requirements for candidates, and a requirement for candidates to demonstrate support from organisations representing journalists and other media stakeholders. As part of the ongoing media law reform, the government has also proposed abolishing the current mechanism linking the rejection of the annual report submitted to Parliament to the potential dismissal of all KRRiT members.

In April 2026, the Commissioner for Human Rights (Ombudsperson) expressed doubts about whether the additional safeguards contained in UC130 would sufficiently ensure KRRiT's independence from external actors. IPI's assessment also raised concerns in this area⁸. The Ombudsperson also questioned aspects of the proposed shortening of the current Council's term and some of the eligibility requirements for KRRiT members⁹. In short, there is still no broadly accepted institutional arrangement following changes in parliamentary and governmental majorities.

The institutional framework for public service media remains unsettled. The PSM companies, Telewizja Polska (TVP), Polskie Radio (PR) and the regional radio broadcasters, continue to operate in liquidation and rely on a combination of licence-fee revenues and substantial state-budget financing. In its 2026 Rule of Law Report the European Commission has expressed concern about the continuation of this arrangement, including the Minister of Culture's direct appointment of liquidators¹⁰. The UC130 draft media law proposes a governance framework that would strengthen the existing programme councils, establish a clearer separation between editorial and managerial structures, dissolve the National Media Council and return responsibility for appointing public broadcasters' management boards to KRRiT. IPI has broadly welcomed this institutional redesign.¹¹ However, the effectiveness of these safeguards will depend substantially on whether KRRiT itself becomes institutionally independent.

As in previous media capture reports, PSM funding also remains an ongoing challenge. While the government proposes replacing the licence-fee model with direct state-budget financing, this creates a new requirement for strong safeguards against annual political bargaining over the public funds allocated to public service media. The current KRRiT regards the liquidation process as a "legal fiction" rather

REGULATORY AUTHORITY

AVMSD ART. 30

UC130 and the regulator

- 1 Rotational membership changes to composition, appointments and terms
- 2 Stricter eligibility professional and independence requirements
- 3 Stakeholder backing from journalists' and media organisations
- 4 No collective dismissal over the rejection of the annual report

Status **Draft, not adopted**

PUBLIC SERVICE MEDIA

EMFA ART. 5

In liquidation since December 2023

- Telewizja Polska
TVP, public television
- Polskie Radio
PR, public radio
- Regional radio
the regional public
broadcasters

Liquidators appointed by **Minister of Culture**

8. *The International Press Institute*, Poland: Opinion on EMFA reform of Broadcasting Law, ipi.media/wp-content/uploads/2026/01/Poland-Opinion-on-EMFA-reform-of-Broadcasting-Law.pdf, [accessed: October 12, 2026].

9. *Opinia Rzecznika Praw Obywatelskich do projektu nowelizacji ustawy o rtv. Odpowiedź MkiDN*, bip.brpo.gov.pl/pl/content/rpo-rtv-projekt-nowelizacji-ustawy-opinia-odpowiedz, [accessed: October 16, 2026].

10. *The European Commission*, 2026 Report on the rule of law situation in Poland, commission.europa.eu/document/download/593831c4-dde6-4443-89a1-fb81da85dd25_en?filename=Country%20report%20-%20Poland%20-%20EN.pdf, [accessed: October 16, 2026].

11. *The International Press Institute*, Poland: Opinion on EMFA reform of Broadcasting Law, ipi.media/wp-content/uploads/2026/01/Poland-Opinion-on-EMFA-reform-of-Broadcasting-Law.pdf, [accessed: October 12, 2026].

than a genuine process, and argues that public broadcasters have become financially dependent on government budget allocations.¹² In contrast, the government presents the proposed funding reform as a means of establishing a stable replacement for an ineffective licence-fee system.

Previous media capture reports identified state advertising as one of Poland's capture vulnerabilities, because safeguards to ensure the transparent, proportionate and non-discriminatory distribution of public/state advertising are lacking.

The 2026 reform process in Poland needs to be assessed not only according to the existence of new formal requirements, but also on whether information on state-media financial relations becomes comprehensive and accessible enough to permit effective public scrutiny. The overall media transparency assessment reveals a blend of formal transparency and structural secrecy, making it difficult to access, find and trace both ownership and financial data¹³.

The UC130 draft media law proposes introducing rules governing the distribution of state advertising, including requirements for public bodies to establish and publish transparent allocation criteria and disclose information about advertising recipients and expenditure. The draft also addresses a publicly accessible database by the KRRiT, containing information on media ownership and public advertising expenditure. According to the draft these rules would extend beyond government ministries to include state-controlled companies and local government entities.

Ownership and market pluralism also remain vulnerable. The Media Pluralism Monitor 2026 classifies market plurality in Poland as medium-high risk, including very high risk for the plurality of media providers and high risk for editorial independence from commercial and ownership influence.¹⁴ Several structural cases remain unresolved. Since January 1, 2025 TVN and Polsat continue to be classified as strategic companies, meaning that changes in their ownership require state approval. At the same time, Polska Press, one of the country's largest regional newspaper groups, remains controlled by the state-owned energy company PKN Orlen, despite previous announcements concerning its eventual sale and criticism over media capture by the previous government.

The UC130 draft media legislation gives KRRiT expanded responsibilities for assessment and an advisory role on media pluralism. This could improve oversight, but once again its effectiveness depends on the regulator possessing sufficient independence, resources and professional capacity. The concentration of additional EMFA-related functions in a regulator whose institutional independence remains contested therefore represents both an opportunity and a potential systemic vulnerability.

MISUSE OF STATE FUNDS

EMFA ART. 25

UC130 and state advertising

- 1 Allocation criteria set and published by public bodies
- 2 Disclosure of recipients and expenditure
- 3 Public database of media ownership and state advertising, kept by KRRiT
- 4 Wider scope ministries, state-controlled companies and local government

Status **Not adopted**

MEDIA PLURALISM AND POLITICAL INFLUENCE

EMFA ART. 6 & 22

12. *Krajowa Rada Radiofonii i Telewizji: Zawiadomienie do prokuratury - oświadczenie Przewodniczącej KRRiT* [Notification to the Prosecutor's Office - Statement by the Chairperson of KRRiT], www.gov.pl/web/krrit/zawiadomienie-do-prokuratury--oswiadczenie-przewodniczacej-krrit, [accessed: October 12, 2026].

13. *The Euromedia Ownership Monitor 2025. Poland: Country report*, media-ownership.eu/2025-edition/country-reports/poland/, [accessed: October 16, 2026].

14. *The Media Pluralism Monitor 2026. Poland: Country report*, cmpf.eu.eu/country/poland-2026/, [accessed: October 16, 2026].

02

Has the situation improved?

Only on paper. Poland has made more visible progress towards reforming its media governance framework than was evident in the 2025 monitoring period. For the first time, there is a government draft law that addresses the EMFA's core requirements, from the composition and appointment of KRRiT to a governance framework for public service media and new pluralism responsibilities for the regulator. In practice, however, nothing has yet changed. The draft has not reached the Sejm; public broadcasters remain in liquidation, with liquidators appointed by the Minister of Culture; the regulator, with its conservative majority, is at odds with the reform; and the Ombudsperson has questioned whether the draft's safeguards are sufficient. The principal challenge is therefore no longer only the absence of reform proposals, but whether reform can establish institutions capable of surviving changes of political power without renewed partisan restructuring, and of going beyond political divides ahead of the 2027 parliamentary elections.

03

Outstanding problems

MEDIA REGULATORS

AVMSD ART. 30

KRRiT's independence has never been fully secured, and its conservative majority is in open conflict with the government. UC130 would change its composition, appointments and terms and remove the link between rejection of its annual report and dismissal, but the Ombudsperson doubts the safeguards are sufficient, and the draft would give the regulator new powers before its independence is settled.

PUBLIC SERVICE MEDIA

EMFA ART. 5

TVP, Polskie Radio and the regional broadcasters remain in liquidation, with liquidators appointed directly by the Minister of Culture and funding from licence fees and substantial state-budget transfers. The planned move to direct budget financing, stalled by a dispute over its cost, would need strong safeguards against annual political bargaining.

MISUSE OF STATE FUNDS

EMFA ART. 25

Safeguards for the transparent, proportionate and non-discriminatory distribution of state advertising are still lacking, and ownership and financial data remain hard to trace. UC130 would require public bodies to disclose state advertising expenditure, including the media recipients and amounts allocated, and make this information publicly accessible. No reform in this area has been adopted.

OWNERSHIP TRANSPARENCY AND PLURALISM

EMFA ART. 6 & 22

The Media Pluralism Monitor 2026 rates the plurality of media providers at very high risk. Polska Press remains owned by state-controlled Orlen despite announcements of its sale, and TVN and Polsat remain classified as strategic companies whose ownership changes require state approval. The regulator's planned role in assessing pluralism depends on its independence.

An annual measure of how far EU Member States have fallen under media capture, and of how well they meet the standards set by the European Media Freedom Act to combat it.



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