

**Maria Giryn-Boudy**

ORCID: 0000-0002-9660-1980

*Politechnika Koszalińska*

**Dariusz Magierek**

ORCID: 0000-0002-7835-3282

*Politechnika Koszalińska*

## Public debate in the 2020 presidential elections in Poland

### Debata publiczna w wyborach prezydenckich w Polsce 2020

**Słowa kluczowe:** debata publiczna, wybory prezydenckie, Polska, 2020

**Keywords:** public debate, presidential election, Poland, 2020

#### Streszczenie

Funkcja debat publicznych jest dziś kluczowa. Ekspertsi uważają, że o ostatecznym wyniku wyborów mogą zadecydować debaty prezydenckie. Liczy się tylko to, co każdy z kandydatów powie i jak się zaprezentuje. Debata publiczna jest narzędziem tworzenia wiedzy powszechnej, a więc wiedzy o wiedzy innych. Przeprowadzana zgodnie ze zrozumiałymi i przystępnymi zasadami stanowi podstawę legitymizacji działań podejmowanych w wyborach prezydenckich. Sposób organizacji debaty ma zatem fundamentalne znaczenie dla zarządzania publicznego. Ideą zarządzania publicznego jest kształtowanie warunków i upraszczanie procesów interakcji pomiędzy uczestnikami debaty publicznej. Obserwacje dyskursu publicznego mają zazwyczaj charakter dyscyplinarny, gdyż dotyczą zjawisk zachodzących w obszarze polityki, socjologii i komunikacji medialnej<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> B. Nogalski, J.M. Rybicki, *Dialog społeczny jako forma i instrument podnoszenia sprawności zarządzania publicznego*, [w:] *Problemy zarządzania organizacjami publicznymi*, red. B. Koźuch, Kraków 2006, s. 154.

Celem artykułu jest więc określenie i ocena, jakie warunki dla debaty prezydenckiej w 2020 r. zostały spełnione oraz jakie kwestie i czy zostały w niej poruszone. W artykule przyjęto następującą hipotezę: „Debaty publiczne w wyborach prezydenckich w Polsce w 2020 r. nie dotyczyły spraw ważnych dla Polaków, a skupiała się jedynie na aspektach drugorzędnych, raczej nieistotnych”. W artykule sformułowano następujące pytania badawcze: jaka jest istota i zakres debaty publicznej?, jakie kwestie poruszano podczas debaty prezydenckiej 2020 w Polsce?, jak debata prezydencka przekłada się na społeczną ocenę kandydata na prezydenta?

Aby osiągnąć zamierzony cel pracy wykorzystano źródła wtórne. Literaturę przedmiotu, w tym zagadnienia związane z analizą dyskursu publicznego, publikacje naukowe, raporty z badań oraz strony internetowe można zaliczyć do źródeł wtórnych. Metody, które zostaną wykorzystane do badań w artykule to: metoda badania dokumentów oraz metody opisowe. Technika badania dokumentów opiera się na badaniu istniejących już materiałów źródłowych i zwykle odbywa się w zakresie grup sformalizowanych. Zazwyczaj badania takie przeprowadza się w organizacjach lub przedsiębiorstwach, gdzie podstawą działania są akty prawne, regulaminy określające profil i sposób działania oraz dokumenty urzędowe. Technika ta znajduje szerokie zastosowanie w różnych dziedzinach ze względu na swoją wszechstronność. Tak naprawdę każdy dostępny dokument może być przedmiotem badań i przynajmniej w określonej części przedstawiać daną sytuację.

Artykuł składa się z trzech części. Część pierwsza pozwala zapoznać się z tematem dyskursu publicznego w ujęciu teoretycznym. Ponadto przedstawiono tu również podstawowe elementy dyskursu publicznego między przedstawicielami elity politycznej. Część druga opisuje debatę publiczną przed pierwszą turą wyborów prezydenckich w 2020 r. w Polsce. Omówiono główne kwestie poruszane podczas debaty oraz wypowiedzi kandydatów, ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem wypowiedzi Andrzeja Dudy i Rafała Trzaskowskiego. Starano się również przedstawić elementy i zagadnienia, których zabrakło w debacie publicznej. Część trzecia jest częścią uzupełniającą i stanowi krótki opis debaty publicznej przed drugą turą wyborów prezydenckich w Polsce w 2020 r. Całość pracy podsumowuje zakończenie, które jest podsumowaniem wniosków, jakie zostały wyciągnięte z badań własnych oraz rozważań teoretycznych zawartych w teoretycznym podziale pracy.

## **Abstract**

The function of public debates is crucial these days. Experts believe that presidential debates may decide the final election results. All that matters is what each candidate will say and the way in which they will present themselves. Public debate is a tool for creating common knowledge, thus knowledge about the knowledge of others. Performed in accordance with understandable and accessible rules, it is the foundation

for legitimizing actions taken in presidential elections. The method of organizing the debate has therefore fundamental value for public management. Shaping the conditions and simplifying the interaction processes between participants of the public debate is the idea of public management. Observations on public discourse are usually disciplinary in nature, as they relate to phenomena occurring in the field of politics, sociology and media communication<sup>2</sup>.

The aim of the paper is therefore to define and assess what conditions for the presidential debate in 2020 have been met and what issues and whether they were rightly raised in it. The following hypothesis was adopted for the paper: „The public debate in the 2020 presidential elections in Poland did not concern important issues for Poles, but focused only on secondary, rather unimportant aspects”. The paper formulated the following research questions: what is the essence and scope of a public debate? what issues were touched upon during the 2020 presidential debate in Poland?, how does the presidential debate translate into society’s evaluation of a presidential candidate?

Secondary sources were used in order to achieve the expressed aim of the paper, The literature on the subject, including issues related to the analysis of public discourse, scientific publications, research reports and websites can be classified as secondary sources. The methods that will be used for research in the paper will be: a method of examining documents and descriptive methods. The technique of examining documents is based on examining the already existing source materials and usually takes place in the field of formalized groups. Typically, such research is carried out in organizations or enterprises, where the foundation of operation are legal acts, regulations defining the profile and method of activity, and official documents. Such a technique finds wide application in various fields due to its versatile nature. In fact, every available document can be the subject of research and, at least in a specific part, present a given situation.

The paper consists of three parts. The first allows getting acquainted with the topic of public discourse in theoretical terms. In addition, the basic elements of public discourse between representatives of the political elite are also presented here. The second part describes the public debate before the first round of presidential elections in 2020 in Poland. The main issues discussed during the debate and the candidates’ statements were described, with particular emphasis on the responses of Andrzej Duda and Rafał Trzaskowski. Efforts were also made to present elements and issues that were missing from the public debate. The third part is a complementary part and is a short description of the public debate before the second round of the 2020 presidential elections in Poland. The ending summarizes the whole work,

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<sup>2</sup> Ibidem.

which is a summary of conclusions that have been drawn from own research and theoretical considerations included in the theoretical division of the work.

## 1. The essence and importance of public debate

The concept of discourse appearing in the latest linguistic literature does not have a clearly defined terminological status and in many subject studies it introduces an interpretation mess. It appears that every researcher entering the field of discourse studies must for their own use clarify both the definition framework of this concept and set rigid boundaries of the methodology they want to apply in the description of detailed empirical analyses in order to avoid scientific eclecticism. This is due to the fact that the term discourse – delineating new methodological horizons and tempting with the perspective of a multi-colored description of communicative entities – is also a novel concept in itself, at least in the Polish linguistic tradition and derives from Western research schools, combining sociological, linguistic and textological reflection<sup>3</sup>.

The term discourse is defined in various ways. In order to sort out terminological discrepancies, the lexicographic definitions should be reviewed. General dictionaries of the Polish language generally treat discourse as a conversation, while these definitions usually identify the discourse with a conversational occurrence<sup>4</sup>:

- „conversation, discussion, speech, discourse”;
- preceded by obsolete commentary – „oral or written exchange of views on a subject”.

Generally, traditional scientific terminology also uses linguistic images of the term, revealing its colloquial understanding (e.g. by profiling with synonyms that define simple speech genres, such as: chat, conversation, discussion – to which qualitative or relational qualifiers are attached). Moreover, the scientific image of the term in question is usually burdened with references to the theory of linguistic pragmatics or text linguistics. Hence, in linguistic reflection, a discourse is either „a logically structured statement, operating with argumentation, treated as a juxtaposition of a statement dominated by persuasive or expressive

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<sup>3</sup> M. Czyżewski, S. Kowalski, A. Piotrowski, *Rytualny chaos. Studium dyskursu publicznego*, Wrocław 2004, s. 21.

<sup>4</sup> J. Szacki, *Historia myśli socjologicznej*, Warszawa 2002, s. 905.

elements, or” a systemic repertoire of means, rules, principles serving, especially as a tool for post-semantic interpretation of the linguistic world imagery”<sup>5</sup>.

Many linguists relate the description of the discourse to communication theories, taking into account the roles of communication partners and the communicative behaviors they explicate, and thus – the whole range of social experiences that these partners bring to the conversation. Polish linguists who write about discourse also notice other elements important for its functioning, which are the communicative intention and the speaking strategy implemented. Important elements of the discourse regulating its course are the links between the communicative realities and the dynamics of utterance. The indicated communication models compare the pragmatics of statements with those developed by Prague structuralists<sup>6</sup>.

Therefore, in the context of the deliberations undertaken, public discourse is an extensive message on political issues, created during a conversation (treated more broadly than conversation or dialogue, having the features of textual character (it is an oral text), relating to the sphere of social activities. It includes statements of politicians and journalists, representatives of the public and arises in a communication structure characterized by a high degree of social dissemination<sup>7</sup>.

Communication success depends, among other things, on the control over the flow of information in the discourse and to the extent to which a person is naturally able to accept the dynamics of references and develop the context introduced by the speaker. Genre, similarly to discourse, is a model of communicative behavior of a normative, conventional nature. The relationship between discourse and genre is in some way inseparable – both are communicative occurrences, and the genre can be considered one of the forms of discourse realization, „which cuts out and shapes individual dimensions from a whole range of discursive parameters, adjusted to a specific interaction (in the pattern), and specified in realizations, i.e. single interactions<sup>8</sup>.

Public discourse is a communication system in which intertextual and intercultural signs get activated. This postulate is adopted by Aleksander Woźny, who

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<sup>5</sup> J. Fras, *Komunikacja polityczna. Wybrane zagadnienia gatunków i języka wypowiedzi*, Wrocław 2005, s. 101–102.

<sup>6</sup> M. Wojtak, *O relacjach dyskursu, stylu, gatunku i tekstu*, „Tekst i Dyskurs. Text und Diskurs” 2011, nr 4, s. 69–78.

<sup>7</sup> M. Lisowska-Magdziarz, *Analiza tekstu w dyskursie medialnym*, Kraków 2006, s. 9.

<sup>8</sup> A. Horolets, *Analiza dyskursu w socjologii i dla socjologii*, Toruń 2008, s. 78.

notices that the discourse creates social reality and refers to signs fixed in this reality. No discourse is ever fully autonomous. It is always permeated by various contexts, it is built of many codes<sup>9</sup>.

## 2. Presidential debate before the first round of the 2020 presidential elections

The current president, Andrzej Duda, is the first president in Poland to take part in the debate twice before the first round of the elections. So far, none of his predecessors had appeared at such debates. It is not difficult to recall the situation from six years ago, when Bronisław Komorowski refused to do so. A. Duda appeared on the debate on May 6, as well as a few days before the first round – on June 17.

The questions were formulated in such a way that the allegedly leftist world-view of Andrzej Duda's main rival, Rafał Trzaskowski, could be revealed in all its glory. Those were strange issues, and apart from Duda himself, everyone considered them as artificial and inadequate to the situation. Therefore, the candidates, only to a certain extent, used the time provided to answer the questions of the facilitator, even though they were constantly exhorted on the matter by him. However, he did not go so far as to interrupt any speech, although the regulations supposedly made it possible.

During the TVP debate, in which 11 presidential candidates took part, it was necessary to answer 5 questions:

- relocation of refugees;
- position on giving children an opportunity to prepare for their First Holy Communion during religion lessons at school;
- the issue of signing the act on same-sex marriage;
- stance on the adoption of the euro by Poland;
- if there is a vaccine for Covid-19, should Poland buy it and whether vaccinations should be obligatory.

Self-governing candidate for the highest office in Poland, Szymon Hołownia, stated that he was surprised by the choice of questions which, in his opinion, did not concern the most important issues of Polish society, but were only „on-call questions, which are to indicate how we are currently polarising in Poland”.

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<sup>9</sup> A. Woźny, *Wplątani w lustrację. Z zagadnień transpozycji dyskursów*, Wrocław 2002, s. 98.

According to his opinion, the debate should focus on the safety of Poles, which is currently a key issue. Security is understood in a very wide scope, i.e. health security, security in the network, security related to the geopolitical situation, health protection, education, and the problem of unemployment. These are real and serious problems that should be discussed. Hołownia also emphasized that it was not really a debate, but a presentation of candidates who express their opinion on various issues during short speeches<sup>10</sup>.

On the other hand, Krzysztof Bosak, who was a representative of the Confederation party, decided that the questions that candidates were asked during the public debate were artificial and for show. As he presented in his speech: „The main topic of recent months is the method of managing the economic crisis, not questions related to the euro or the non-existent vaccine, but about existing problems, such as doctors fleeing the country.” When analyzing the issue of the European Union, the fundamental topic is the European Green Deal, new energy regulations – this is a real dispute, where the interests of the state are in the balance<sup>11</sup>.

The first question had the candidates indicating how Poland should behave in terms of the movement of refugees who want to get to the European Union countries. According to President A. Duda, Poland is a nation of hospitable people and a member of the European Union, but many migrants from Ukraine and Belarus come to it and they all live together. As he emphasized, „Poland receives a lot of refugees, but these are people who come to us, but I do not agree to the obligatory transport of people due to relocation”<sup>12</sup>.

Then Rafał Trzaskowski indicated that the refugee problem was solved in 2015, when an agreement with Turkey was signed. There was no consent to coercion, but women and children must be helped. In his opinion, President Andrzej Duda speaks of an imaginary community while the government is usually looking for enemies, not coalition partners.

Władysław Kosiniak-Kamysz emphasized that Poland does not currently have a foreign policy. The time has come to restore Poland’s position in the European Union and place itself in Great Britain, then the country will be strong and safe.

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<sup>10</sup> J. Stasiak, *Debata prezydencka 2020. O co właściwie cały ten spor?*, <https://www.money.pl/gospodarka/debata-prezydencka-2020-o-co-wlasciwie-caly-ten-spor-6527763072165505a.html> [dostęp: 9.11.2021].

<sup>11</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>12</sup> *Debata prezydencka w TVP – co mówili kandydaci? Relacja na żywo – zapis*, <https://www.rp.pl/wydarzenia/art8906181-debata-prezydencka-w-tvp-co-mowili-kandydaci-relacja-na-zywo-zapis> [dostęp: 10.11.2021].

In his opinion, Poland should create humanitarian crossings, there are areas under war and Poland should cooperate with the Church and Caritas charity, as well as sometimes with non-governmental institutions.

In the second question, the candidates were asked to indicate whether they accept the position in order to allow children to prepare for their first Holy Communion during religion lessons at school. Rafał Trzaskowski noted that it is the parents who should decide whether religion should be at school or not. Moreover, he emphasized that “today Poles want a president of the Republic of Poland who not only talks about values, but also practices them. And what my Franciscan catechist, but also my parents taught me, is that it is necessary, above all, to stand by all those who are weaker”<sup>13</sup>.

On the other hand, Szymon Hołownia maintained that it is the school community that should decide whether religion lessons should be offered at school and in what form. It is not the parents, students, ministers or bishops who should have an opinion on this matter. In his opinion, the aspect of separating the Church from the country is one of the most urgent things that should be undertaken in Poland. Hołownia additionally asked President Andrzej Duda why he had not yet appointed his representative in the national commission to explain cases of pedophilia. In this question, it can be noted that Szymon Hołownia was not aware of the fact that Andrzej Duda appointed the psychologist J. Kotowska from the Institute of Psychiatry and Neurology of the Forensic Psychiatry Clinic for this position on May 21<sup>14</sup>.

President A. Duda recognized that relations between the country and the Church in Poland are regulated by both the concordat agreement and the constitution. He emphasized that the fact that he appointed his representative for the commission on pedophilia had been known for a long time and he was surprised that one of the candidates for the presidency did not know about it, which indicated that he has no idea about the issues that were taking place in Poland. In his opinion, in Poland, it is the parents who make the decision regarding their children's upbringing and they should decide whether their children should attend religion lessons<sup>15</sup>.

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<sup>13</sup> D. Gołdyn, *Debata prezydencka TVP za nami. Żółtek skradł show: 'menelowe plus'*, <https://wiadomosci.radiozet.pl/Polityka/Wybory-prezydenckie-2020/Debata-prezydencka-2020.-Co-sie-wydarzylo-Bosak-Tanajno-i-Witkowski-przycmili-pierwsza-lige> [dostęp: 10.11.2021].

<sup>14</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>15</sup> A. Zygiel, *Debata prezydencka. Kandydaci byli pytani m.in. o imigrację, małżeństwa jedнопłciowe i szczepionki*, <https://www.rmf24.pl/raporty/raport-wybory-prezydenckie2020/najnowsze>



In question three, the candidates were asked to indicate whether they would sign the act on same-sex marriages. Marek Jakubiak in his speech said that he was embarrassed that the discussion on this topic was still going on. The constitution clearly and legibly states what a marriage union is. He was in favor of them coping with the inheritance by means of legal acts.

Stanisław Żółtek said that you should not interfere in someone's sexual preferences. He also decided that the income tax should be removed, as in his opinion it is the main reason why homosexuals need to get married – in order to be able to jointly settle accounts<sup>16</sup>.

President Andrzej Duda declared that he did not intend to support any changes in the law that would be introduced by partnerships or same-sex marriage.

From the economy point of view, the question was if and when Poland should accept the euro currency. Confederation MP Krzysztof Bosak noted that the question about the euro is a question about foreign policy, not the economy. According to him, speaking of the economic aspects of European policy, the present draft of a new EU debt instrument is a much bigger problem. According to Bosak, the topic of the euro is a substitute topic, while the most important issues regarding the Polish economy are now the increase in unemployment, the collapse of industrial production or a drop in wages.

Mirosław Piotrowski (Real Europe Movement) declared that he is an opponent of the euro and wants Poland to stick to the zloty. He said that as a presidential candidate he was in favor of lowering taxes – PIT and VAT and introducing a higher income tax allowance.

President Andrzej Duda mentioned that when Poland joined the European Union, it agreed to adopt the common currency in the accession treaty, but without setting a specific date. The president emphasized that the zloty protected Poland twice during the crisis. He assessed that the discussion on the acceptance of the euro should be started by Poland when it would be profitable for it and the Poles would be a wealthy society, which is currently not the case.

Rafał Trzaskowski, speaking of the euro, reminded all present that the accession treaty obliges Poles to introduce the currency, but today was not the proper time for it. The economy had to be saved first and the zloty would stay for a long

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-fakty/news-debata-prezydencka-kandydaci-byli-pytani-m-in-o-imigracje-ma,nId,4559728#crp\_state=1 [dostęp: 10.11.2021].

<sup>16</sup> Ibidem.

time. As for the vaccine, needless to say, there should be access to it. Currently, however, what is more important is what stage we are at with the epidemic. If TVP Info were to be liquidated, the money saved could be spent on oncology. Concluding, Trzaskowski repeated his slogan „Strong president – common Poland”. He promised to work with the government and at the same time to stimulate it into action.

In the last question, the candidates were to indicate in case a coronavirus vaccine were created, should Poland purchase it and whether vaccinations should be obligatory. Władysław Kosiniak-Kamysz said that „bonuses must be introduced for people who have been fighting the coronavirus for months”. Without better functioning hospitals, there will be no security in Poland.

Rafał Trzaskowski emphasized that Polish women and Poles should have access to such a vaccine. On the other hand, he asked President Andrzej Duda two questions: was the pandemic over or not, and were the decisions made in recent weeks correct?

According to Robert Biedroń, in particular, a hate vaccine should be created. According to him, the government had not lived up to its task in the fight against Covid-19. In 2020, there was no information as to whether a vaccine was available and whether it would be available at all<sup>17</sup>.

President Andrzej Duda, in response to the last question, indicated that the vaccine, in particular, should be available to seniors, and later to anyone who would like to have it. President Andrzej Duda, who was running for re-election, assessed that the past 5 years were a good time for Poland. He calculated that the retirement age was lowered, 500 plus, 300 plus school starter kit for children were introduced, zero income tax for young people up to the age of 26, the 13th retirement pension and fair valorization were also brought in. The Poles finally started to live better. Unfortunately, the Coronavirus hit. It was difficult for the economy, but the anti-crisis shields were activated and thanks to that it was possible to protect some jobs. There is a chance for further successful development. Andrzej Duda said: “These obligations are very serious, but you know me for the fact that I take my obligations seriously. Therefore, you can rest assured that we will not only get out of the crisis, but we will return to the path of good development „. Finally, Duda, as always, listed all social transfers provided by PiS and

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<sup>17</sup> J. Harman, *Debata prezydencka w TVP. Jątrzące pytania i fenomen Witkowski*, <https://www.polityka.pl/tygodnikpolityka/kraj/1960650,1,debata-prezydencka-w-tvp-jatrzace-pytania-i-fenomen-witkowski.read> [dostęp: 10.11.2021].

promised to save as many as 4 million jobs at risk. Regardless of the merits of his speech and the honesty or lack of honesty in his arguments, the sitting president performed well in front of his constituents and, perhaps also in front of a number of those who still hesitated whether to vote for him, or maybe for Bosak or Hołownia<sup>18</sup>.

The Mayor of Warsaw, Rafał Trzaskowski, emphasized that Poland needs a strong, fully independent president who looks at the hands of the authorities, asks difficult questions and stimulates the government to act. We really need a president like this today. Also the president who respects his signature very much. The KO candidate also indicated the need to build a community in which we would learn to talk to each other again. From the very beginning, he said that he would not be the president of the total opposition. He will cooperate with the government there when the government will make decisions that will strengthen Poland, but will not agree to breaking the constitution, to granting property rights owing to the state, to trying to appropriate all independent institutions<sup>19</sup>.

The chairman of PSL, Władysław Kosiniak-Kamysz, said that there is no more important matter today than the restoration of the community in Poland. Poland's security is endangered by social division and conflicts. Kosiniak-Kamysz emphasized that Poland has to overcome three crises today: health, economic and political and systemic. In his opinion, it can only be done in cooperation, caring for everyone, not for the chosen ones.

Publicist Szymon Hołownia (non-party) assessed that other candidates tried to pretend that they would be presidents of all Poles, independent of their parties. When Andrzej Duda or Rafał Trzaskowski hide their party logos, I will still have to remain faithful to my political parents.

### **3. Presidential debate before the second round of the 2020 presidential elections**

The debate that was to take place before the second round of the presidential election was to be conducted by such stations as: TVN, TVN24, Wirtualna Polska and Onet. The public debate was to happen on July 2, but only Rafał Trzaskowski

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<sup>18</sup> *Debata prezydencka w TVP – co mówili kandydaci? Relacja na żywo – zapis*, <https://www.rp.pl/wydarzenia/art8906181-debata-prezydencka-w-tvp-co-mowili-kandydaci-relacja-na-zywo-zapis> [dostęp: 10.11.2021].

<sup>19</sup> *Ibidem*.

accepted the invitation. On July 1, the invitation was rejected by the staff of President Andrzej Duda. Trzaskowski called on Duda to enter a real debate. He believed that the idea of several editorial offices entering into an agreement together could come to fruition and then that Andrzej Duda would be put in a public debate, where it would be possible to address the key issues discussed by Poland and Poles, in particular, including security, health service, the level of education and the fight for jobs<sup>20</sup>.

The Ombudsman recognized that due to the fact that the debate did not take place before the second round of the presidential elections, the public lost the opportunity to get to know the program and the vision of the presidency of both candidates impartially. Calls were made for the creation of a unified standard and manner of conducting presidential debates. There was no agreement on a joint public debate between the staffs and the candidates who ran in the second round of the elections, so each contender appeared separately. According to the Commissioner for Human Rights, neither of the parties was satisfied with such a turn of the matter, which is indicated by, for example, the mutual accusations made against the rivals<sup>21</sup>.

The necessity for the public media to organize a debate between candidates is rooted in the applicable provisions of law. Pursuant to the regulation of the National Broadcasting Council of 6 July 2011 on the exact rules and method of conducting debates by Telewizja Polska Spółka Akcyjna on Telewizja Polska SA, it is obligatory to conduct debates between candidates in the election for the President of the Republic of Poland. It should ensure equal conditions for participation in the debate for all candidates. The KRRiTV regulation also obliges TVP SA to conduct a debate without the audience participating in the studio. However, these provisions have not been fully applied in practice. This could significantly limit many Polish citizens from being able to objectively learn about the program and the vision of the presidency of both candidates.

Among the ideas indicated in the public space are, among other things, appointment of a special committee on the format of presidential debates. The aim of such a solution would be to develop relatively permanent rules thanks to

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<sup>20</sup> J. Harman, *Debata prezydencka w TVP. Jątrzące pytania i fenomen Witkowski*, <https://www.polityka.pl/tygodnikpolityka/kraj/1960650,1,debata-prezydencka-w-tvp-jatrzace-pytania-i-fenomen-witkowski.read> [dostęp: 10.11.2021].

<sup>21</sup> B. Bodalska, *Wybory prezydenckie: Dwie debaty przed drugą turą?*, <https://www.euractiv.pl/section/demokracja/news/wybory-2020-dwie-debaty-prezydenckie-przed-druga-tura-andrzej-duda-rafal-trzaskowski/> [dostęp: 10.11.2021].

which both voters and candidates would be sure that the debates will take place when agreed and on what terms. However, it would be possible on the condition that the rules established and accepted by everyone would constitute a kind of honorary obligation, a code of ethics, the violation of which would entail widespread criticism and loss of support from potential voters.

After the elections, Adam Bodnar invited all interested parties to the Office of the Human Rights Defender, mainly representatives of journalistic organizations, public opinion research institutions, scientific and expert circles. It was about reaching an agreement and developing a common standard and format for presidential debates. According to the Ombudsman, elements of this solution could also be used on other occasions, e.g. during parliamentary or local elections. Representatives of public authorities, political parties and self-government associations could also participate in the meeting as observers.

## **Conclusion**

The aim of the work has been largely achieved. It was shown that important issues such as security, economy and health care were not touched upon in the election debate. The only question relating to the economy was about the euro. Mostly, side issues were raised that did not relate to the significant problems of Polish society. In 2020, the staffs of the contenders for the presidency had a particularly difficult task. In the TVP Info station, which, apart from the program of the first TVP, broadcast the debate, right before the program, a journalist praised A. Duda and shook the opinion of Rafał Trzaskowski. It was undeniably aimed at emphasizing the president's success, and at the same time it was a violation of the principle of equal treatment of all candidates.

During the presidential debate on TVP, most of the questions concerned ideological issues. In the public debate of TVP, questions were raised about the relocation of refugees, homosexual marriages, religion lessons in schools and preparation for communion, Poland's adoption of the euro and obligatory vaccinations against the coronavirus. Candidates had not had many opportunities to present their vision of the economy and to make viewers aware of what they are up to if they win. In their responses, the candidates tried to smuggle their plans into the economy. The contenders for the presidential chair were asked whether Poland – and possibly when – should adopt the euro. Apart from this one question, economic issues were present only thanks to the initiative of the politicians

themselves, who themselves pointed out that there were more important problems than religion in schools.

Trzaskowski's flagship election promise, which he presented at the beginning of June, was the draft modesty bill. It was supposed to force the government to comply with the Chimney Act. According to it, management board members of companies controlled by the State Treasury may receive up to 7–15 times the average salary plus a bonus. The money saved in this way could support, for example, pay raises for teachers. In his campaign, the politician argued that solutions that would increase the retirement age should not be introduced, and that a system should be created in which people would be able to make a choice themselves if they wanted to work longer.

President Andrzej Duda, who fought for re-election with the support of PiS, decided that the euro should be adopted when it would be in the interest of all Poles. You should consider the pros and cons and decide when Poles will constitute an affluent society. The most important election promise by Andrzej Duda, announced in May 2020, was the support of people affected by the coronavirus pandemic. It was about a solidarity allowance, which was to be a benefit granted for 3 months in the amount of PLN 1,400 per month. A bill on this issue was submitted to the Sejm. In May, the president also added that in the event of re-election, he would implement his program called „Obrońmy Polska Plus” – primarily the preservation of the Family 500 Plus program and the thirteenth pensions program and the implementation of seniority pensions (when awarding it, the key factor is the length of service, not the age of a specific person).

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