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The Justice System in Media Narratives Shaping Public Security (2022–2024)

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Abstract:

Purpose: The paper examines the role of contemporary media in shaping social perceptions of the justice system and its impact on public security. Its aim is to analyze how media narratives influence citizens' trust in justice institutions, the subjective sense of security, and social expectations regarding reforms of the justice system.

Design/methodology/approach: The study adopts a qualitative and conceptual approach based on an analysis of media messages related to court proceedings, judicial decisions, and the activities of law enforcement agencies. The research focuses on identifying dominant mechanisms of media influence, such as selective presentation of events, amplification of high-profile cases, and the phenomenon of media "trials."

Findings: The findings indicate that media representations significantly affect public perceptions of the justice system and public security. Media play a dual role: they can strengthen trust and the sense of security by demonstrating the effectiveness of justice institutions, but they can also undermine these values through sensationalism, distortion, and premature public judgments. Media narratives influence social trust in state institutions and contribute to shaping public expectations concerning justice system reforms.

Research limitations/implications: The paper is conceptual in nature and does not rely on primary empirical research, which limits the ability to establish causal relationships. The analysis provides a basis for further empirical studies on media influence, public trust, and the perception of public security.

Practical recommendations: Media organizations should adhere to principles of journalistic reliability and responsibility, avoiding sensationalism and ensuring balanced reporting on judicial matters. Justice institutions should engage in transparent communication to counteract misinformation and strengthen public trust.

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Originality/value: *The paper contributes to the literature by highlighting the interdependence between media communication, the justice system, and public security. It emphasizes the significance of media narratives in shaping social perceptions of justice and security, offering a framework for understanding their impact on public trust and social stability.*

Keywords: *Justice system, media, public security, public opinion.*

JEL Code: *K14, L82, H56.*

Paper type: *Research article.*

1. Introduction

Addressing the issue of social views regarding the justice system simultaneously leads to placing the media at the central point of interest. Media, occupying a particular position in contemporary reality, thus play a key role in shaping public opinion, including perceptions of state institutions. Media power encompasses all spheres of social, cultural, and political life. The importance of the media is indicated by the constitutional guarantee of freedom of the press contained in Article 14 of the Constitution of the Republic of Poland.

One of the areas particularly susceptible to media narratives is the justice system, which constitutes a pillar of public security, social order, and public order. Media outlets reporting on the course of court proceedings, prosecutorial activities, or the work of law enforcement agencies influence the perception of the justice system, contributing either to the building of social trust in the internal security system or to its undermining. In the context of public security, it is important how the media present court decisions, the effectiveness of crime reduction, and the criminal policy and enforcement capacity of the state. Such narratives may strengthen the sense of justice in society or create an image of an ineffective justice system that does not meet the requirements of reality.

There is also a real risk of media pressure on the bodies of the justice system, which may affect the course of proceedings and judicial rulings. Moreover, the year 2023 was a year of parliamentary and local elections in Poland, and the process of shaping the rule of law, since 2015, has been and continues to be the subject of internal disputes, and until 2023 also of disputes involving EU justice institutions.

The aim of the article is to obtain answers to the following research hypotheses: (1) The intensity and manner of presenting the activities of the justice system in the media influence the sense of public security. (2) Dominant media narratives

influence the shaping of social trust in justice system institutions as guarantors of public security. (3) The more frequently the media perform educational and supervisory functions with regard to the security system, the higher the legal awareness of citizens and the expectation of transparency in the actions of institutions responsible for public security.

As the research method, a critical analysis of media articles and reports, specialist literature, legal acts, justice system databases, periodicals, and internet sources was employed, supported by a descriptive and graphical method.

2. The Justice System in Shaping Public Security

Security is a multifaceted, multidimensional concept that is difficult to define unequivocally. Public security is a key paradigm that significantly influences the sense of stability and the protection of citizens against internal threats. It is a complex concept that encompasses both physical protection against threats and the psychological sense of stability and security. Independent media act as communicators and transmitters of these projections for society, shaping the social sense of public security. Public security constitutes a multidimensional system of activities ensuring the stable functioning of society and the state, free from serious threats.

The scope of public security includes the entirety of activities of the state and its institutions, as well as social mechanisms aimed at ensuring public order, protecting the life, health, and property of citizens, and safeguarding the interests of the state against threats of both internal and external character. It represents the highest social value conditioning the safety of citizens' lives, their certainty in everyday functioning, and peace of mind regarding their own life and health, as well as that of their close relatives and their property (Babiński, 2020). In these considerations, an important role in this respect is assigned to the justice system.

The term "justice system" in Polish terminology is interpreted in various meanings. The difficulty in precisely defining this concept results from the fact that it has not been explicitly defined in the Polish legal system. The lack of a definition of the "justice system," both in the Constitution of 1997 and in the Constitution of 1952, may justify the suggestion that the legislator thereby referred to the concept of so-called established notions, that is, notions which had already been defined prior to the entry into force of the Constitution (Kluz, 2013).

At the root of the Polish concept of the "justice system" lies the Latin term *iurisdictio*, *iurisdicere*, meaning "the adjudication of law." In this understanding, the justice system, in a general sense, is associated with conflicts, disputes, and differences in views. At the same time, the justice system involves not only the formal resolution of disputes, but also their fair resolution (Piasecki, 2005). The entities performing tasks within the justice system include judges, notaries,

attorneys, legal advisers, bailiffs, prosecutors, lay judges, the Prison Service, the Police, the Border Guard (SG), the State Fire Service (PSP), and the Military Police (ŻW). The judiciary and the prosecution service, however, are the two most important institutions whose condition defines the current state of the justice system.

The task of fair dispute resolution is entrusted to the courts, whose primary function is the administration of justice. This mission, understood in such a manner, belongs to the priorities of state activity and consists in resolving conflicts concerning rights, where at least one of the parties is an individual or another entity, by means of state coercion, in accordance with appropriate procedural rules, and carried out by competent judicial bodies.

The administration of justice is not exercised by tribunals, i.e. the Constitutional Tribunal and the Tribunal of State (Ministerstwo Sprawiedliwości, Fundacja Togatus), whereas administrative courts constitute a separate branch of the justice system. Access to justice is a right of every citizen, guaranteed by the Constitution of the Republic of Poland, which states that: “(1) Everyone has the right to a fair and public hearing of his or her case, without undue delay, before a competent, independent, impartial, and independent court. (2) Exclusion of the public from a hearing may occur for reasons of morality, state security, or public order, or for the protection of the private life of the parties or another important public interest. Judgments shall be pronounced publicly.” (Konstytucja RP, 1997).

The Constitution of the Republic of Poland also provides that: “(1) Justice in the Republic of Poland shall be administered by the Supreme Court, common courts, administrative courts, and military courts. (2) An extraordinary court or a summary court may be established only for the duration of a state of war.” (Konstytucja RP, 1997).

Public security, together with the justice system, serves to protect the legal order and to ensure stability and citizens’ trust in state institutions. The consolidation of public security authorities, the prosecution service, and the courts guarantees that preventive and repressive actions provide a sense of security and protection for citizens. The normative foundation of public security and the justice system results from the fact that they operate within the same legal system, and that the activities of state security authorities are subject to judicial review through the legitimization and conferral of legal force on the outcomes of the work of services ensuring public security.

Cooperation between the public security sphere and the justice system effectively reduces the level of threats in various areas of socio-economic life. Public security authorities (Ustawa o Straży Granicznej, 1990; Ustawa o ABW i AW, 2002) are responsible for preventing and responding to threats, while the justice system (Prawo o ustroju sądów powszechnych, 2001) is responsible for assessing the legality of these actions and administering justice with regard to perpetrators.

The synergy of these activities creates a coherent mechanism for the protection of the state, while at the same time guaranteeing respect for human rights. The differences and points of convergence between public security and the justice system are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. *The relationship between public security and the justice system*

Criterion	Public security	Justice system	Points of convergence and cooperation
Primary objective	Ensuring public order and peace, protecting the life, health, freedom, and property of citizens, and counteracting threats	Administering justice through the application of law, resolving disputes, and punishing perpetrators of violations of the law	Both systems strive to maintain the legal order, protect citizens' rights, and ensure the stability of the state, including through the implementation of new technologies.
Functions	Preventive (preventing crimes, misdemeanors, and disasters), protective, and intervention-oriented	Preventive (punishment, preventive measures), supervisory (legality of the actions of authorities), and educational (rehabilitation/resocialization)	Prevention and repression complement each other—services prevent, while courts assess and punish.
Entities	Police, Border Guard (SG), State Fire Service (PSP), Internal Security Agency (ABW) and Foreign Intelligence Agency (AW), Central Anti-Corruption Bureau (CBA), uniformed services, and public administration (governmental and local self-government)	Common courts, administrative courts, military courts; the Constitutional Tribunal; the prosecution service; the bar (advocates) and legal advisers	The Police conduct investigative and preparatory activities under the supervision of the prosecution service, while the courts assess the legality of the actions of the services.
Methods of operation	Patrol activities, personal and vehicle checks, monitoring, interventions, detentions, the use of direct coercive measures and firearms, rescue operations	Judicial proceedings (criminal, civil, administrative), judicial rulings, penalties, educational and preventive measures	Evidence materials collected by security services constitute the basis for judicial decisions
Response time	Immediate or ad hoc (interventions, prevention, response in crisis)	Subsequent (examining cases after the fact, imposing penalties, resolving disputes)	Preventive and intervention activities of the services initiate

	situations)		prosecutorial and judicial procedures.
Role toward the citizen	Ensuring a sense of public security, protection against threats, and providing assistance	Guaranteeing justice, protecting individual rights and freedoms, and holding violations of the law accountable	Balancing the collective interest (security) with the protection of individual rights (justice)
Types of threats	Crime, terrorism, sabotage, subversion, natural disasters, accidents, epidemiological, sanitary, migration-related, and environmental threats	Violations of the law – crimes, misdemeanors, civil delicts, property and family disputes, administrative cases	Shared responsibility for limiting the effects of threats to society and the state
Effects of actions	A state of public security and public order, minimization of the risk of threats, and a sense of personal and socio-economic stability and certainty	Ensuring and maintaining the rule of law, fair adjudication, and a sense of justice and citizens' trust in state institutions	Joint construction of legal and social security, strengthening the potential of internal security
Legal sources	The Constitution of the Republic of Poland (Articles 5, 31, 38, and 175), the systemic acts on the Police, the Border Guard (SG), the State Fire Service (PSP), the Internal Security Agency (ABW) and the Foreign Intelligence Agency (AW), the Military Police (ŻW), and the Act on Crisis Management	The Constitution of the Republic of Poland (Chapters VIII and IX), the Code of Criminal Procedure, the Civil Code, the Law on the Public Prosecutor's Office, and the Act on the System of Common Courts	The same legal system regulates the area of public security operating within the limits of the law, and the courts oversee the legality of actions.

Source: *Own study.*

Public security, together with the justice system, constitute two pillars of the system for protecting the state and its citizens. The former is responsible for the ongoing maintenance of public order and security, as well as for preventing and responding to threats, while the latter is responsible for the legal assessment of the conformity of these events with the law and for holding parties accountable. Together, they form a coherent and effective system that guarantees both a sense of public and social security and respect for citizens' rights (Ministerstwo Sprawiedliwości, 2025).

The implementation of new technologies is not without impact on the shape of the justice system and the rules governing proceedings. The world of digitalization is changing the approach to the essence of the justice system and the right to a court, and poses new challenges in terms of the computerization of this area of public security. It is important to determine to what extent technological progress is transforming the justice system and improving the architecture of public security, and whether it does not infringe upon the realization of one of the fundamental principles of the functioning of the state, namely the right of access to courts.

The process of information transformation within the justice system in Poland involves the implementation of new IT systems and digital data exchange in order to improve the functioning of courts, prosecution services, and other entities, enhance security, and provide citizens with transparent access to information. Key initiatives in this area include the “Digital Court” programme implemented by the Ministry of Justice, the aim of which is to create a unified case management system, adapt courts to contemporary challenges, and optimize their operation.

The programme’s implementation schedule extends until 2029, and the estimated cost of its implementation amounts to PLN 193 billion. Another undertaking is the implementation of the PROK-SYS project within the prosecution service, enabling remote communication and access to databases. Changes concerning the justice system focus, inter alia, on improving the efficiency of the justice system and supporting those mechanisms that enhance communication between courts and citizens, streamline proceedings, translate into greater effectiveness in court functioning, and increase accessibility and openness to citizens’ needs.

From the perspective of public management, it is crucial to introduce ethical and legal principles for AI projects in courts and security services, including:

- legality and proportionality — the tool must have a legal basis and be appropriate to the intended purpose;
- data minimization and information security — processing only what is necessary, with a complete access log;
- non-discrimination — testing the equality of outcomes for protected categories and implementing corrective mechanisms;
- transparency — informing parties about the use of algorithmic tools and the possibility of challenging the result;
- accountability — assigning responsibility for implementation, monitoring, and updates;
- auditability — periodic reviews of quality and security with the publication of summaries of results.

From an operational perspective, it is recommended to establish regulatory sandboxes for AI solutions, central catalogues of tools approved for use within the justice system, as well as training programmes (benchbooks) for judges, prosecutors,

and probation officers, covering the basic principles of how models operate, typical interpretative errors, and evidentiary standards for digital content.

Finally, in the social and communicative dimension, AI may improve access to justice through language assistants that simplify forms, generate comprehensible summaries of documents, translate judgments into non-specialist language, or support persons with disabilities (e.g. live captions, speech synthesis). Such applications strengthen trust in institutions and reduce information asymmetry between professional participants in proceedings and citizens.

A condition for success, however, is the consistent adherence to the principle that technological innovation should serve the realization of procedural rights and guarantees, and not the other way around. Therefore, each implementation should be accompanied by performance indicators (shortening of case processing time, reduction in the number of overturned decisions, user satisfaction) and public reporting of progress, so that digitalization — including the AI component — genuinely strengthens both the efficiency of the justice system and the level of public security perceived by citizens (Ministerstwo Sprawiedliwości, 2025).

3. Media in the Projection of the Objective Reality of the Justice System

Media security may be considered not only from the perspective of the individual, but also from the point of view of the state and society. In this respect, it may be understood as a state of uninterrupted functioning of the media system in a given country.

This system consists of many factors, ranging from the media education of society and its preparedness to receive media content, through technical and technological conditions of media accessibility, legal guarantees of freedom of information, expression, and opinion formation, to the existence of a media order, which constitutes the basis of a pluralistic media system and ensures the possibility of free and independent expression of views, as well as the absence of concentration of media ownership in the hands of a limited number of entities.

Media messages constitute one of the needs of individuals functioning in a society saturated with the rich architecture of the digital world and information. The dominant form of social contact in the informational dimension is not direct interaction, but mediated, non-coercive participation through the media, which shape a specific virtual reality—a media culture in which almost all human activities are supported by media and teleinformation forms.

The sense of media security in the era of media based on interactivity and networking is ensured by a technical component related to knowledge and skills in using media, a cognitive component related to knowledge and the ability to analyse, assess, and acquire necessary information from databases, a social component

related to knowledge and the ability to use this information in communication processes concerning its distribution among other users of the media space, as well as the ability to create original verbal, visual, and audio messages (Wasiuta & Klepka, 2019).

Media security is a state of certainty and calm, or a sense of freedom from threats in the contemporary media space, including the media system of a given state. It is also a dynamic process, the course of which changes under the influence of transformations of post-industrial society, which is sustained primarily by the production, storage, processing, and distribution of information.

The concept of media security also touches upon numerous conditions of the functioning of social media that have not yet been fully recognised. Concern for media security arises from the fact that contemporary citizens, regardless of how actively they engage in acquiring information about the most important social and political processes of the surrounding world, are to a significant extent dependent on knowledge derived from the media (Wasiuta, Klepka, and Kopeć, 2018).

The manner in which media information is received is most strongly influenced by the level of formal education of a given person and their position in the social structure, and to a lesser extent by age and gender. The basic functions performed by the media in a democratic society include (Wasiuta, Klepka, and Kopeć, 2018):

- informing citizens about what is happening around them;
- an educational function – the media should teach how to understand and assess the significance of facts; therefore, the professionalism of journalists, their objectivity, and their ability to maintain distance from the issues being analysed are of particular importance;
- a platform for public political discourse – the media should facilitate the formation of public opinion and its presentation to the society that has expressed it, and should publicize scandals and instances of law violations by actors of political, social, and economic life in all their aspects;
- a channel for the expression of political views – thanks to the media, all political actors, such as parties or associations, can propose and present ideas, defend their views, and convince others of their validity.

The media also perform important functions and provide services for the political system in a democracy, among which the most important are considered to be (Wasiuta, Klepka, and Kopeć, 2018):

- monitoring the socio-political reality;
- informing about changes that may positively or negatively affect the welfare of citizens;

- setting the agenda by identifying the key issues of the day, including indicating the entities that contributed to their emergence and may resolve them;
- providing a platform for the clear and instructive presentation of views by politicians and spokespersons of other interest groups;
- conducting dialogue that allows for diverse viewpoints, including between those in power (current and future) and the mass public;
- creating a mechanism that enables those in power to be held accountable for how they have exercised authority;
- creating a system that encourages citizens to learn, participate in elections, and engage politically, rather than merely observe or support selected aspects of the political process;
- expressing firm opposition to efforts by any forces acting to undermine the independence of the media, their integrity, and their commitment to serving the public;
- demonstrating respect for the public as potentially interested in and capable of understanding the political environment.

Due to the tasks performed by the justice system in public life and in the area of public security, it constitutes a sufficient subject of media interest in this issue. Daily news is characterized by varying degrees of generality, ranging from overview articles or broadcasts to brief information on specific cases or proceedings within the justice system. In general, these media messages may be divided into (Daniel, 2013):

- more or less extensive reports on specific court proceedings;
- messages concerning irregularities in the functioning of specific courts;
- general information regarding the justice system in Poland, its organization, structure, and activities;
- projects of judicial reform;
- statements by representatives of the justice system on specific cases;
- fictionalized programmes depicting the work of judges (e.g. television programmes featuring Judge M. Wesołowska or programmes such as “Czarno na białym”);
- commentaries referring to issued court judgments.

Even a general characterization of media messages concerning the justice system should be preceded by a preliminary reflection on the role and significance of social communication. The process of knowledge acquisition is also influenced by demographic factors and psychological cognitive processes. It is indisputable that the media play a unique role in conveying information about the world and shaping specific visions of the surrounding socio-economic reality.

Rejecting extreme concepts, it is a fact that the media, to a certain extent, create a particular image of reality, and depending on the manner in which the adopted vision is disseminated through media messages, its impact on society may be interpreted as

either value-enhancing or destructive (Drożdż, 2005). For media security, the existence of many independent sources of information is essential, as this guarantees media pluralism—media that remain outside government control and outside the pressure of political parties seeking to shape political beliefs and attitudes. Such media should also be effectively protected by law (Ustawa o radiofonii i telewizji, 1992).

The media also shape social views regarding whether we live in a state governed by the rule of law, which guarantees every individual that they will not be deprived of their rights, and that if such rights are violated, independent courts will ensure their protection and restoration. The importance of the media is underscored by the constitutional provision stating that “The Republic of Poland shall ensure freedom of the press and other means of social communication.” (Konstytucja RP, 1997).

4. The Role of the Media in Explaining Public Security in the Area of the Justice System

The demand for information exists in all areas of the functioning of society, including the area of security, becoming a market good and forcing competition between public and private mass media. The architecture of the digital world has resulted in mass media transmitting all important events, particularly those of a sensational nature, on both national and international scales. In the contemporary geopolitical reality, information is an invaluable asset; therefore, it should be useful, easily accessible, accurate, reliable, and credible.

The role of the media in explaining and interpreting public security, including within the area of the justice system, is significant, as they mediate between state institutions responsible for security and society. The media are the first to provide citizens with information about all national and international events, thereby reflecting the activities of public security services (including courts, the Police, the State Fire Service (PSP), the Border Guard (SG), the Military Police (ŻW), and the Internal Security Agency (ABW)), while also providing society with warnings, emergency alerts, and instructions on how to act in crisis situations.

Through education, the media help citizens understand the nature of threats and the mechanisms for protecting public security, and by promoting safe behaviors, they disseminate knowledge about citizens’ rights and obligations in the area of security.

Acting in the role of the “fourth estate,” the media monitor the activities of institutions responsible for security by exposing irregularities, abuses, or inefficiencies in the actions of the government and public services, and by creating a platform for public debate on the quality of the security system and the justice system. The media also provide citizens with information on complex processes related to security, such as the introduction of states of emergency or counterterrorism procedures, explaining the relationship between public security and

individual rights, thereby helping to understand the social and legal consequences of threats and the directions of state action. Through their universal accessibility, the media can mobilize society to undertake actions supporting security, thereby building social solidarity in the face of threats.

The media constitute a dual-use instrument, possessing the potential to support public security by informing the public and building trust, but also capable of weakening this system through distortion, media sensationalism, or the polarization of public opinion, by politicizing security issues and promoting negative attitudes that may be exploited by groups seeking to undermine the legal order or to provoke panic and reduce social trust in the state or security institutions. It is essential that the media perform their informational role in a responsible manner and in accordance with the principles of truth, avoiding sensationalism and focusing on the reliable presentation of reality.

Media also successfully fulfilled an informational role in the 20th century by conveying the results of research conducted by academic centers concerning the functioning of justice system institutions in Poland. Even a cursory analysis of the results obtained in studies carried out by various research institutions over more than 20 years allows the conclusion that Polish society has developed a fairly pronounced critical attitude toward the justice system, and consequently toward public security in this area.

In this context, an intensification of critical views is evident in comparison with the opinions dominant in the 1970s and 1980s, when a decisive majority of Poles assessed the functioning of courts positively, as evidenced, *inter alia*, by the general belief that court judgments “are always correct” (25.1%) or “correct in a very large number of cases” (51.8%) (Daniel, 2013).

Research results indicate that the justice system then enjoyed a relatively high level of social trust. The period of systemic transformation was characterized by a marked increase in criticism of the justice system. Referring to cyclical opinion polls conducted by the Public Opinion Research Center (OBOP), it was shown that in the years 1995–1999 only between 53% and 58% of respondents declared trust in the justice system, while between 32% and 40% of respondents expressed a clear lack of trust. Particularly alarming were the results of a survey conducted by the Public Opinion Research Center (CBOP) at the beginning of 1989 (Daniel, 2013), in which only 29% of respondents positively assessed the functioning of the justice system.

In the opinion of 59% of Poles, judgments issued by courts were unjust. Moreover, 84% of Poles were convinced that courts differentiated the way they treated persons whose cases they adjudicated, primarily depending on the material status of the parties, which was commonly associated with corruption within the justice system.

Twenty-two percent of respondents accused the Polish justice system of excessive length of proceedings; other allegations included leniency (11%) and poor, socially and economically inadequate law (21%). In 2002, the primary sources of information about the functioning of the justice system were: television (86%), the press (42%), radio (21%), the Internet (1%), informal contacts (9%), and “personal experience” (4%) (Borucka-Arctowa, 2003). Analysis of results from 2009 also indicates that the main source of information about the functioning of the justice system remained the media, including television (68.7%), daily newspapers (33.8%), radio programs (30.5%), and the Internet (20%).

Other sources of information included informal conversations with family and friends (24.2%) and direct experience gained in courts (20.1%) (INDICATOR, 2009). Surveys conducted by CBOS at the end of 2012 likewise showed that 64% of respondents formed their opinions about the justice system on the basis of what was conveyed by the media (Siedlecka, 2013). In turn, CBOS survey results from March 2017 indicated that in December 2012, 47%, and in 2017, 45% of respondents positively assessed the activity of justice system institutions, while the opposite opinion was expressed by 48% of respondents in 2012 and 50% in 2017.

The share of sources shaping opinions about the functioning of the justice system was distributed as follows: personal experience—17% (2012) and 18% (2017); knowledge from television and newspapers—61% (2012) and 54% (2017); what other people say about courts and judges—16% (2012) and 21% (2017); other sources—1% (2012) and 3% (2017). The research demonstrated that the dominant source of knowledge about the justice system were the media (CBOS, 2017).

The results of CBOS research from July 2022 indicated that Poles assessed the functioning of the justice system unfavorably over recent years: “definitely good” and “rather good”: 22% (2005), 46% (2007), 28% (2012), 36% (2017), and 28% (2022); “rather bad” and “definitely bad”: 69% (2005), 41% (2007), 61% (2012), 51% (2017), and 55% (2022). Polish society holds divided opinions regarding the preservation of the independence of the justice system in the current political situation.

The primary source of knowledge—and thus also of opinions and views—about the functioning of the justice system continued to be the media: television, newspapers, and the Internet (52%), followed by the experiences and opinions of family and friends (16%), personal experience (12%), what other people say about courts and judges (9%), other sources (3%), and “hard to say” (7%).

According to respondents, the current problems of the justice system result from its politicization, the lack of the rule of law, violations of the Constitution, and the lack of independence of courts from politicians (18%); the authorities of the Ministry of Justice and the prosecution service were indicated as the greatest problem of the

Polish justice system (4%); failure to respect the judgments of European courts (2%); and political pressure and preventing judges from adjudicating (2%) (CBOS, 2022). In 2024, Poland ranked 33rd in the Rule of Law Index published by the World Justice Project, which represents an increase of 3.2% compared to 2023. This was the first improvement in Poland's ranking position since 2016 and indicates a positive direction in restoring the rule of law in Poland. (Ministerstwo Sprawiedliwości, 2025)

The presented research results, conducted by professional research institutions, indicate that social assessments of the justice system are shaped to a decisive extent not by more or less direct contact with justice institutions, but by information conveyed through the media. The contemporary media market is not only a source of information delivery, but also creates the overall awareness and views of society.

Generational changes, religious affiliation, political views, level of education, and place of residence play a significant role in the selection of information sources. Of crucial importance in media communication, moreover, is a high level of journalistic professionalism, understood as the reliable, responsible, and ethical performance of the profession, care for truth and the quality of messages, as well as systemic, personnel, and legal solutions that ensure the media function as independent centers of information.

5. The Effectiveness of the Functioning of the Justice System in the Years 2022-2024

The assessment of this period cannot be reduced to a single indicator. On the one hand, systematic modernization of the work of courts and prosecution services is evident: the increasingly widespread use of electronic records, remote hearings, electronic service of documents, broader access to case files in digital form, and improved scheduling of court hearings.

On the other hand, bottlenecks persist, including staffing shortages in adjudicatory and support units, overburdening of selected divisions, as well as delays resulting from the need to await expert opinions in narrow specializations. For citizens, this simultaneously means easier access to their cases and greater transparency of document circulation, but also the risk that proceedings may "stall" at a stage requiring rare expertise or additional technical activities.

In terms of efficiency, the greatest changes have occurred in the organizational and technical sphere. Tools that organize the inflow of submissions and signal formal deficiencies facilitate the circulation of cases, while electronic records and transcriptions shorten the time required for activities in the courtroom. In the prosecution service, remote access to case files and data exchange between institutions have become widespread, which accelerates the preparation and supervision of proceedings. Increasingly, solutions based on artificial intelligence

operate in the background: speech recognition for the purposes of record-keeping, categorization of submissions and automatic anonymization of judgments, and intelligent searching of case-law lines.

These tools are supportive in nature and—importantly—do not replace decisions made by a judge or prosecutor. The principle that “the human decides, technology supports” remains a condition for trust in the outcomes of the process. The quality of adjudication is influenced primarily by better access to legal knowledge and more coherent databases of case law.

Text analytics helps to reach relevant legal views more quickly and to compare lines of argumentation, but it is still the judge who evaluates the evidence and performs legal subsumption. In this context, the transparency of the tools used becomes increasingly important—clarity as to what data they process, what limitations they have, and how they are supervised—which is directly linked to the constitutional right to a fair trial and to a reasoned judicial decision (Goban-Klas, 2015).

The third dimension of effectiveness is accessibility. For parties and their legal representatives, the greatest difference is often made by seemingly minor facilitations: the possibility of submitting pleadings electronically, viewing case files without a personal visit, reminders of deadlines, and the rapid availability of hearing records.

However, this progress must be reconciled with equality of access—digital facilitations must not become digital barriers. Elderly persons or those with limited technological resources should be guaranteed a full “analog” path so as not to lose real access to the courts. An important contextual factor remains the role of the media. The manner in which proceedings and individual high-profile cases are reported directly shapes perceptions of the system’s effectiveness and reliability.

A single spectacular story can overshadow thousands of ordinary, properly concluded proceedings. Therefore, institutions need calm and systematic communication: publishing transparent data, explaining the objectives and stages of digitalization, and clarifying the principles of using new tools—including those based on artificial intelligence. At the intersection of public security and judicial proceedings, the credibility of digital evidence is becoming increasingly important.

The chain of custody—time stamps, cryptographic hashes, and metadata—must be safeguarded with the same diligence as the physical securing of traces, and the competencies of digital forensic experts should grow in line with the increasing possibilities of image and sound manipulation. AI can assist in detecting abuses, but it does not relieve humans of the obligation of professional verification and assessment (Misiuk, 2008).

In summary, the balance of the years 2022–2024 is cautiously positive. A tangible improvement in infrastructure and work organization is visible, and citizens' contact with the courts is becoming simpler and more predictable. At the same time, the system continues to experience staffing shortages and uneven workloads, which slow down certain proceedings.

Nevertheless, the direction is clear: consistent streamlining of case management, the prudent use of technology—especially where it saves time without infringing procedural guarantees—and reliable communication with citizens. Only such a combination can translate sustainably into more efficient courts, higher-quality adjudication, and, most importantly from a social perspective, a stronger sense of public security.

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