Pobrane z czasopisma Mediatizations Studies **http://mediatization.umcs.pl**
Data: 23/11/2026 10:07:38

MEDIATIZATION STUDIES 1/2017 DOI: 10.17951/ms.2017.1.83

AGNIESZKA ŁUKASIK-TURECKA

John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin, Poland

aturecka@kul.pl

Promotion of the Referendum Questions or Promotion of Entities? Communication in the Referendum Campaign as Exemplified by Free Broadcasts of the Entitled Entities on Polish Radio Lublin

Abstract. The present article seeks to answer the question whether the fact that during the referendum campaign in 2015 the entitled entities had the opportunity to utilize free broadcasting time in order to promote their activity affected the dominance of such content over the content concerning the issues raised in the referendum questions. Information on politics is obtained mainly from the media; the mediatization of politics is also allowed by Polish legislation, which provides for the opportunity to use free broadcasts on public media *inter alia* during referendum campaigns by entitled political entities. However, the possibility of using the free broadcasting time for the purposes other than stipulated in the law was not provided for. The research material was the free referendum broadcasts of the entitled entities, aired by Radio Lublin S.A., the method applied being the content analysis (quantitative and qualitative).

The main hypothesis, which assumed that the entitled entities used the allocated air time to promote themselves, *inter alia* through popularizing their names in the public space at the expense of the issues raised in the referendum questions, was positively verified as a result of research.

Keywords: nationwide referendum; free radio broadcasts; Radio Lublin

Introduction

The majority of information on politics that we receive comes from the media. As Manuel Castells observes, political communication and information are essentially captured in the space of media, outside the media sphere there being only political marginality. And although, as he stresses, media politics is not all politics, all politics must go through the media to affect decision-making [Castells 2009, p. 335, 340]. It is the media that decide the choice of materials, their importance, and the

Pobrane z czasopisma Mediatizations Studies **http://mediatization.umcs.pl**
Data: 23/11/2026 10:07:38

question which political entity will have a chance to communicate its message to the audience. Under such circumstances, political entities are nowadays condemned to mediatization instead of direct contact with citizens [Michalczyk 2010, p. 55]. Over the recent years, part of this climate is not only the activities of the media but also of the legislators, who provide for free broadcasting time in the public media to entitled subjects during electoral and referendum campaigns.

The referendum of September 2015 was meant as a lifeline for Bronisław Komorowski, who sought re-election as President of Poland. Devised between the first and second election round, it was expected to reverse the adverse trend and give the then president a chance of victory. Equally instrumental was the referendum proposal put forward by the newly elected president – Andrzej Duda. According to a columnist, "Through his move, President Duda wanted to muster up the PiS (Law and Justice) electorate and stimulate again all those who took offense at the Civic Platform, first of all for the Tusk government having raised the retirement age" [Janicki 2015, p. 13].

Journalists termed the proposals of the presidents, first the one by Bronisław Komorowski, and then the other by Andrzej Duda, about calling referenda, as a "referendum game". Instead of being understood as a festival of democracy, they were interpreted either as "a legacy of the presidential campaign, Komorowski's unsuccessful election device", or as "an election maneuver of the newly elected president for his own party" [Janicki 2015, p. 14].

The plans of the presidents failed; President Komorowski lost to the PiS candidate in the second round, while the Senate refused to agree to the referendum proposed by President Duda. The plebiscite, which cost the taxpayer ca. PLN 100 million, was participated in by only 7.8% of the entitled voters (State Election Commission 2015), the fewest in the history of nationwide plebiscites [Szacki 2015, p. 14]. This low turnout, apart from the awareness that the referendum was used as an instrument in the election campaign, was indisputably influenced by the questions to be answered by the voters. According to Jan Skórzyński, the short history of Polish plebiscites shows that the referenda more likely to be attended by the citizens are those concerning the most essential matters that decide the future of the country, such as the new constitution or entry into a united Europe" [Skórzyński 2015, p. 58][1]. Nor did the failure to explain to the citizens the matters on which they were to voice their opinion contribute to an increased interest in the referendum[2].

[1] The fact that Skórzyński was right may be evidenced *inter alia* by the turnout at the Warsaw referendum of 2013. The question of Hanna Gronkiewicz-Waltz's possible dismissal from the post of Warsaw President (Mayor) did not prove interesting enough for the referendum results to be binding as the turnout was only 25.66%. For more on the Warsaw referendum, see: Kolczyński [2014, pp. 139–150].

[2] Journalists even compared the course of the Polish referendum with the Swiss practice. For more, see: Ostrowski [2015, pp. 52–53].

Pobrane z czasopisma Mediatizations Studies **http://mediatization.umcs.pl**
Data: 23/11/2026 10:07:38

In the referendum of 6 September 2015 the citizens were to take a stance on three questions:

1. Are you for single-seat constituencies in the elections to the Sejm of the Republic of Poland?
2. Are you for maintaining the current way of funding political parties from the State budget?
3. Are you for introducing the general principle of resolving doubts about the interpretation of tax law provisions in favor of the taxpayer?

The media accused political entities that, instead of conducting a fact-based referendum campaign, they treated the voters to an emotional one. Two weeks before the date of the referendum, Eliza Olczyk shared her observations with the *Wprost* magazine readers:

> none of the parties has taken the trouble to explain to their readers in what ways the first-past-the-post (single-seat constituency) system is superior to the proportional system or the other way round. Nor have they tried to explain how the parties can be funded from sources other than the State budget. The third referendum question, i.e. resolving tax doubts in favor of the taxpayers, has not even been mentioned at all. It is actually irrelevant now, although it was included in the ballot paper [Olczyk 2015, p. 14].

Despite the short time of the referendum campaign, the entities involved in it began communication activities in order to persuade citizens to take part in the referendum, as well as to answer the questions in a specific way. Like in election campaigns, in the case of the referendum campaign the entitled entities could also use free broadcasts in the public media. The difference between the campaigns was that while in the election campaign an election broadcast could be aired only by the entitled entities that registered their candidates or their candidate tickets in the broadcasting area of a public radio station or Polish Television station, the areas being determined each time by the National Broadcasting Council (KRRiT), the referendum campaign allowed each of the entitled subjects to air their broadcasts regardless of where the seat of the entity was located.

Under Art. 49 § 2 of the National Referendum Act of 14 March 2003,

> a referendum broadcast is a part of a radio or TV program, not authored by a particular station, aired free of charge, which is a separate whole on account of its form or content and enables the entitled entity to use its allotted broadcasting time for the purpose of conducting its referendum campaign. The law defines a referendum campaign as the presentation of one's stance by citizens, political parties, associations, foundations, and other entities, **concerning the issue under referendum** [author's emphasis] (Art. 37).

The media circulated information that the referendum became "a form of promotion and profit, utilized by different non-governmental organizations that have nothing to do with the subject matter of the referendum" [Sandecki 2015], and that

Pobrane z czasopisma Mediatizations Studies **http://mediatization.umcs.pl**
Data: 23/11/2026 10:07:38

the entities using free broadcasting time were actually promoting themselves rather than explaining the issues presented in the referendum questions, which was in contravention of the provisions of the Act.

The law provides for the allocation of free broadcasting time to all entities that meet the requirements specified in Art. 48 § 1[3]. The State Election Commission (Państwowa Komisja Wyborcza) refused to allocate free air time to 24 organizations (Państwowa Komisja Wyborcza 2015)[4], having allocated it to 133 entities, *inter alia* associations, foundations, social organizations and to political parties (Państwowa KomisjaWyborcza 2015), of which only 74 used the free broadcasting time on public TV, and barely 40 – on the radio [Dąbrowska 2015, p. 13]. As Anna Dąbrowska observes, the problem stems from the fact that "everyone can say what they like during their allotted minutes, which often has nothing to do with the ordered referendum" [Dąbrowska 2015, p. 13]. Dąbrowska remarks that for an entity to use free referendum broadcasts it was enough to have a provision in the entity's statute, concerning the promotion of democracy or working for resourcefulness. She gives the example of the Children Promotion Academy Foundation, [Fundacja Akademia Promocji Dzieci] which placed a spot on public TV that informs what attitudes the Foundation creates and promotes (the keywords in it were: ingenuity, integration, Europe, democracy, patriotism), and encouraging the audience to vote in the referendum. The spot ended with the chart

[3] Under the law, the entities entitled to take part in the media campaign in the public media are political parties, parliamentary groupings (parliamentary deputies and senators), associations, foundations and plenipotentiaries. All entities are eligible to take part in the above campaign if they meet requirements specified by law. For example, in the case of political parties, those are eligible if, in the last elections to the Sejm before the referendum, they, as separate election committees, gained on the nationwide scale at least 3% of valid votes for their regional tickets of Sejm MP candidates or were a part of an election coalition whose regional MP tickets gained at least 6% of valid votes on the nationwide scale. In the case of parliamentary groupings, MPs groupings or senators groupings, those are eligible who, prior to the day of announcement of the resolution or decision to call a referendum, consisted of, respectively, MPs or senators chosen from among the candidates proposed by the voters' election committee, those MPs and senators constituting more than half of the makeup of the groupings. The entitled associations or other social organizations are those that were registered or that applied in accordance with the provisions in force, not later than a year prior to the day of announcement of the resolution or decision to call a referendum, and whose area of operation covers the whole territory of the Republic of Poland, and which conduct activities associated with the object of the referendum, the activities being within the scope of their statutory goals. Foundations had to meet similar requirements except for the requirement that their area of operation cover the whole territory of the Republic of Poland (see the National Referendum Act of 2003, Art. 48 § 1).

[4] They were *inter alia* Voluntary Fire Brigades in Ostrowce Tuszowskie and in Pajęczno, the Safe Kraków Foundation (Fundacja Bezpieczny Kraków), and the Kowary Seniors' Club (Kowarski Klub Seniora). As Anna Dąbrowska observes, "the several-person legal section of the State Election Commission examined the statutory goals of the applying entities and interpreted them fairly liberally" [Dąbrowska 2015, p. 13].

Pobrane z czasopisma Mediatizations Studies **http://mediatization.umcs.pl**
Data: 23/11/2026 10:07:38

with the data concerning the Foundation and an appeal to people to pay in 1% of their tax on the Foundation's account [Dąbrowska 2015, p. 13].

The doubts related to the content of broadcasts proposed by the entitled entities could not be resolved either by the State Election Commission or by the media, in which the material was aired. Even if the material delivered to or recorded in the studio contained no references to any of the referendum questions, no interference could be made since the Referendum Act provided no grounds for either the State Election Commission or the public media to assess its content. As Dąbrowska stresses, under the National Referendum Act an intervention is allowed only if the spots persuaded the listeners to break the law [Dąbrowska 2015, p. 13]. Consequently, the entitled entities were allowed to air any content, including texts that were meant only to promote the entities or their representatives, without having to pay anything. The cost of such promotions was paid for by the taxpayer[5].

Representatives of the eligible entities did not even hide the fact that they consciously used the free air time allocated for referendum broadcasts to promote themselves or the organizations that they represented. Journalists cite the statements by particular subjects who gave the actual reasons for seeking the free broadcasting time in the referendum campaign. These were, *inter alia*: running for the Senate, as in the case of Roman Giertych, President of the Institute of State Thought [Dąbrowska 2015, p. 14]; running for the Sejm – the case of *inter alia* Paweł Helis, President of the Association: Our Common Silesian Home, or the appearance of an organization in the media, which mattered considerably to Daniel Kolanko of the Association for the Development of the Village of Wietrzno "Wiatr" ["Wind"] [Sandecki 2015].

The referendum campaign of 2015 was not the first one in which the entitled persons or organizations used the allocated free air time to promote themselves or their activities, not necessarily referring to the elections for which a particular campaign was conducted. As early as 1995, the presidential candidate, mechanic Kazimierz Piotrowicz, used the allocated broadcasting time to promote his product: bio-energy-therapeutic insoles [Piasecki 2012, p. 90; Dąbrowska 2015, p. 13].

The objective of the present article is to try to answer the question whether the fact that the entitled entities had an opportunity to use free air time to promote their own activities influenced the dominance of the content of this kind over the content concerning the issues raised in the referendum questions. The author of the present study decided to verify it based on the analysis of free broadcasts aired by one regional Polish Radio station: Radio Lublin S.A. The research material was, therefore, free referendum broadcasts of 30 entitled entities, aired on Radio Lublin S.A. The total time of referendum broadcasts on Radio Lublin S.A. was 15 hours, which was 900 minutes to

[5] In her article, Dąbrowska cites the calculations of the Polish radio spokesman, Radosław Kazimierski, who appraised the air time allotted to referendum broadcasts aired in Channels 1 and 3 of the Polish Radio as worth PLN 580 thousand [Dąbrowska 2015, p. 14].

Pobrane z czasopisma Mediatizations Studies **http://mediatization.umcs.pl**
Data: 23/11/2026 10:07:38

be analyzed. Each entity was given 30 minutes, which equaled 8 broadcasts, each 225 seconds long. The research period covered the whole time of airing free referendum broadcasts: from 21 August 2015 to 4 September 2015. The method applied was the content analysis (quantitative and qualitative).

Before the investigation, the main research question was formulated:

Q – Did the entitled entities discuss the issues raised in the referendum questions in their broadcasts or did they promote themselves by introducing the entity's name into the public space?

The accusation of the entities being promoted at the taxpayer's expense would be confirmed if the broadcasts were not used for the purpose for which they were intended, in this case – to promote the referendum, and the way of answering particular referendum questions. To make the main research question more specific, three particular questions were asked:

Q1 – Did the entitled entities persuade the listeners in their broadcasts to take part in the referendum?

Q2 – Did the entitled entities take a stance on the questions, and suggest answers to individual questions?

Q3 – Did all the entities fully use their allotted air time?

The first two specific questions deal with the subject matter raised in the broadcasts. Both the taking of stances by the entitled subjects on participation in the referendum and on the questions themselves, i.e. the broadcasts raising the matters because of which the referendum was called, allows us to assume that the broadcasts were used for the intended purpose. Question Three, about the use of the broadcasting time, enables verification whether the entities seriously treated their voluntary, after all, participation in the referendum campaign.

On the basis of research questions, research hypotheses were formulated, taking into account the information in the media, presented in the first part of this study. Consequently, the main hypothesis was that:

H – The entitled entities used their allocated broadcasting time to promote themselves by making the name of the entity known in the public space at the expense of explaining the issues raised in the referendum questions. On the basis of specific questions, specific hypotheses were formulated:

H1 – The entities present in the broadcasts did not advise the listeners to take part in the referendum.

H2 – In the broadcasts, the entities did not take a stance on the questions and did not suggest the answers to individual questions.

H3 – In most cases, the entities did not fully use the allotted air time.

Pobrane z czasopisma Mediatizations Studies **http://mediatization.umcs.pl**
Data: 23/11/2026 10:07:38

Table 1. Entities entitled to air free referendum broadcasts on Polish Radio Lublin

No.	Name of the entitled entity
1.	Europejski Instytut Studiów i Analiz w Lublinie [European Institute for Studies and Analyses in Lublin]
2.	Fundacja Aktywności Lokalnej [Local Activity Foundation]
3.	Fundacja im. J. Madisona Centrum Rozwoju Demokracji – Jednomandatowe Okręgi Wyborcze [J. Madison Foundation: Center for the Development of Democracy: Single-Seat Constituencies]
4.	Fundacja im. Krzysztofa Skubiszewskiego [Krzysztof Skubiszewski Foundation]
5.	Fundacja Instytut Studiów Obywatelskich Obywatele24.pl [Institute of Civic Studies Obywatele [Citizens] 24.pl Foundation]
6.	Fundacja Promocji Mediacji I Edukacji Prawnej LEX NOSTRA [Foundation for the Promotion of Mediation and Legal Education LEX NOSTRA]
7.	Fundacja Wolność i Nadzieja [Freedom and Hope Foundation]
8.	Instytut Myśli Państwowej [Institute of State Thought]
9.	Instytut Wolności Obywatelskiej i Gospodarczej [Institute of Civil and Economic Freedom]
10.	Nasz Wspólny Śląski Dom [Association: Our Common Silesian Home]
11.	Niezależny Samorządny Związek Zawodowy Rolników Indywidualnych "Solidarność" [Independent and Self-Governing Trade Union of Individual Farmers "Solidarity"]
12.	Platforma Obywatelska Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej [Civic Platform of the Republic of Poland]
13.	Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe [Polish People's Party]
14.	Projekt Arche [Arche Project]
15.	Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej [Democratic Left Alliance]
16.	Stowarzyszenie Koliber [Hummingbird Association]
17.	Stowarzyszenie Komitet Obywatelski Miasta Koszalina [Civic Committee of the City of Koszalin Association]
18.	Stowarzyszenie Narodowe im. Romana Dmowskiego [Roman Dmowski National Association]
19.	Stowarzyszenie na Rzecz Rozwoju Wsi Wietrzno "Wiatr" [Association for the Development of the Village of Wietrzno "Wiatr" ["Wind"]]
20.	Stowarzyszenie na Rzecz Wolnego Handlu [Association for Free Trade]
21.	Stowarzyszenie na rzecz Zmiany Systemu Wyborczego – Jednomandatowe Okręgi Wyborcze [Association for Changing the Electoral System: Single-Seat Constituencies]
22.	Stowarzyszenie OBURZENI [The OUTRAGED Association]
23.	Stowarzyszenie "Obywatele Przeciw Bezprawiu" ["Citizens against Lawlessness" Association]
24.	Stowarzyszenie Patriotyczne i Samorządowe "Ojczyzna – Rodzina – Sprawiedliwość" [Patriotic and Self-Government Association "Fatherland – Family – Justice"]
25.	Stowarzyszenie "Pokolenia" ["Generations" Association]
26.	Stowarzyszenie Rozwoju Miejscowości Zając, Gminy Liw i Okolic "LEPUS" [Association for the Development of the Village of Zając, Commune of Liw and the Neighboring Area "LEPUS"]
27.	Stowarzyszenie Solidarni 2010 [The Solidary 2010 Association]
28.	Stowarzyszenie Solidarność Walcząca [Fighting Solidarity Association]
29.	Stowarzyszenie Wspólnota [Community Association]
30.	"To Co Najważniejsze" ["The Most Important" Foundation]

Source: Author's own research based on Radio Lublin materials.

Pobrane z czasopisma Mediatizations Studies **http://mediatization.umcs.pl**
Data: 23/11/2026 10:07:38

Table 1 presents 30 entities which expressed their wish to take part in the referendum campaign on Radio Lublin and whose applications were accepted by the State Election Commission. Among the entitled entities there are both those representing political parties and foundations or associations not directly connected with the political arena.

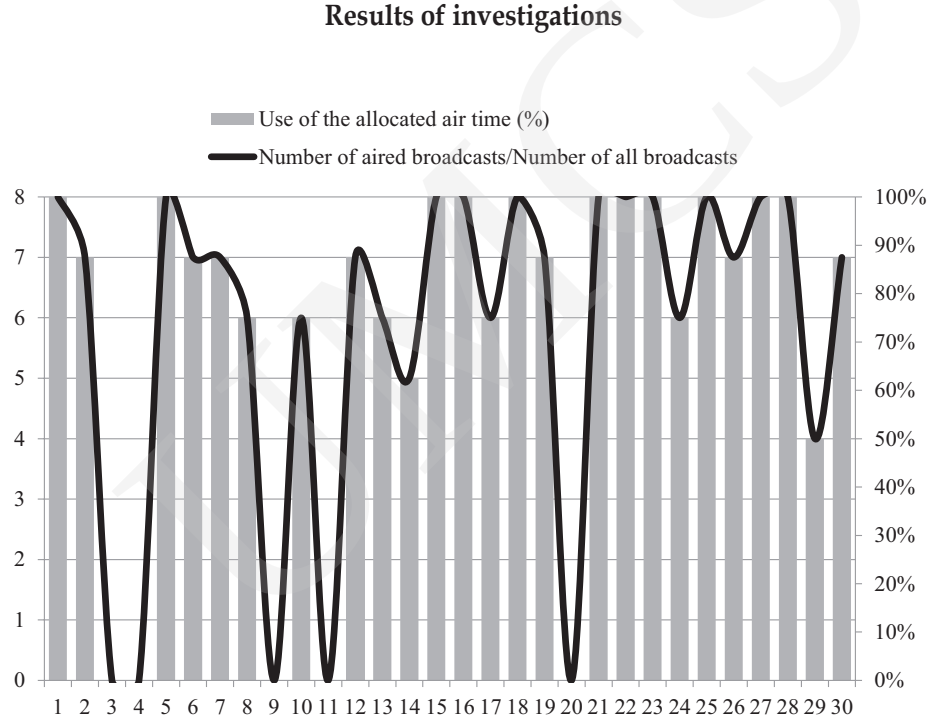

Chart 1. The use of allocated air time by entitled entities
Source: Author's own research.

Barely 11 out of the 30 entities entitled to air free referendum broadcasts on Radio Lublin used 100% of their allocated time, which meant the airing of all the 8 broadcasts. The entities were:

- European Institute for Studies and Analyses in Lublin,
- Institute of Civic Studies Obywatele [Citizens] 24.pl Foundation,
- Democratic Left Alliance,
- Hummingbird Association,
- Roman Dmowski National Association,
- Association for Changing the Electoral System – Single-Seat Constituencies

Pobrane z czasopisma Mediatizations Studies **http://mediatization.umcs.pl**
Data: 23/11/2026 10:07:38

- The OUTRAGED Association,
- "Citizens against Lawlessness" Association,
- The "Generations" Association,
- The Solidary 2010 Association,
- The Fighting Solidarity Association.

As many as 5 entities did not take the opportunity to air their materials on the radio and did not air any broadcast despite having complied with all formalities. They were:

- J. Madison Foundation Center for the Development of Democracy: Single-Seat Constituencies,
- Krzysztof Skubiszewski Foundation,
- Institute of Civil and Economic Freedom,
- Independent and Self-Governing Trade Union of Individual Farmers "Solidarity",
- Association for Free Trade.

The remaining 14 entities used their allocated air time to a different extent, ranging from 50% to 87.5%.

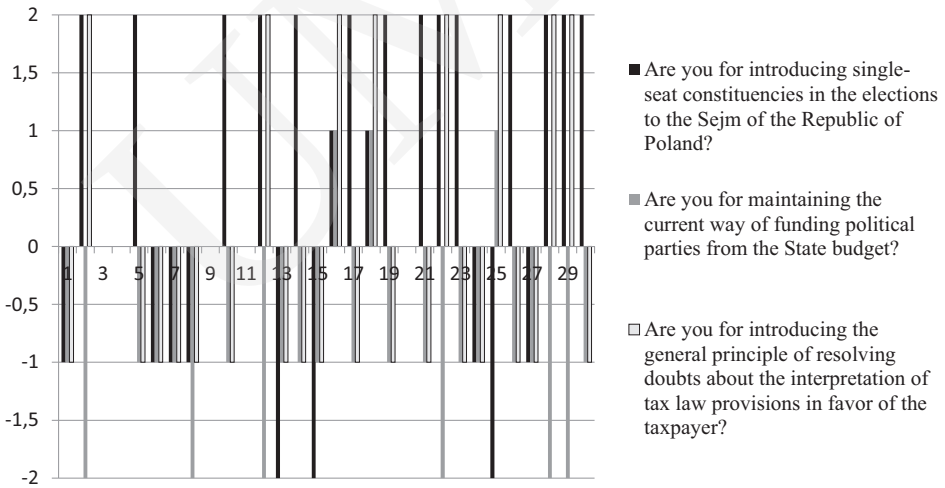

Chart 2. Answers to the referendum questions suggested by the entitled entities
Source: Author's own research.

Chart 2 shows that the positive answer was suggested most often for the question no. 1, about the introduction of single-seat constituencies (14 entities). The positive answer to the referendum question was also suggested in the discussion of the issues contained in the question no. 3, about introducing the general principle of resolving doubts about interpretation of tax law provisions in favor of the taxpayer (8 entities). Negative answers were usually suggested to the audience in the case of the question no. 2, about the way of funding political parties (6 entities). A negative answer was also suggested in the case of the question no. 1 (3 entities).

Pobrane z czasopisma Mediatizations Studies **http://mediatization.umcs.pl**
Data: 23/11/2026 10:07:38

The value that is most frequent in the chart is -1, which means that the entities usually did not raise specific issues in their broadcasts. This was true for the questions no. 2 and 3 far more often than the question no. 1.

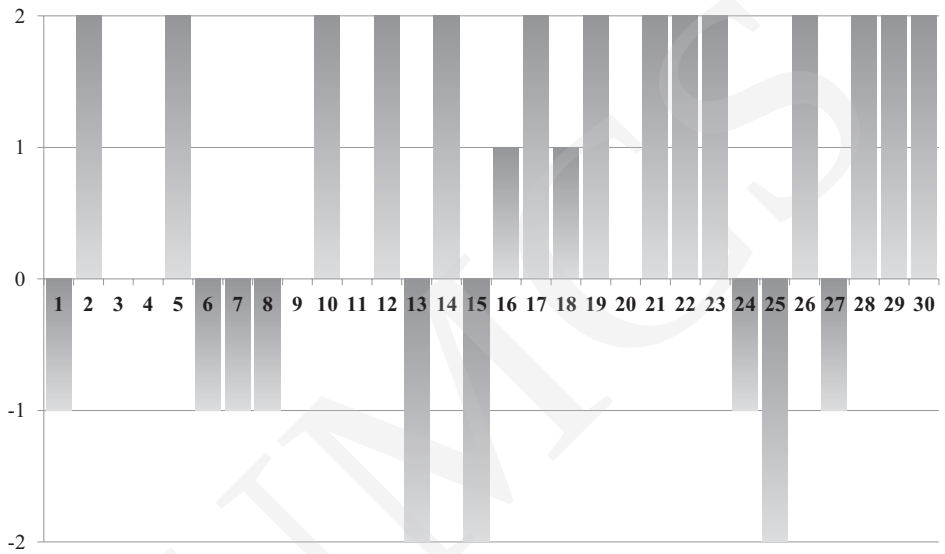

Chart 3. The answer to Question One suggested by the entitled entities
Source: Author's own research.

Chart 3 shows that 14 entitled entities suggested that listeners give "yes" answers to the first referendum question about the possible introduction of single-seat constituencies in the election to the Sejm of the Republic of Poland. Six entities did not raise the issue in their broadcasts, while 2 entities discussed the problem of single-seat constituencies without, however, taking an explicit stance on the issue. Only 3 entities suggested a negative answer to the audience in their broadcasts. Those against single-seat constituencies were: the Polish People's Party (PSL), Democratic Left Alliance, and "Generations" Association. The PSL representatives argued: "The false appearances of single-seat constituencies may turn out so ineffective that we will elect someone who only has more money or has conducted his election campaign more effectively" (Free referendum broadcasts of the Polish People's Party 2015). In its broadcasts, the Democratic Left Alliance said:

> Single-seat constituencies mean wasting the votes of the majority of Poles. Only winners in the elections take the seats. To win in a constituency, it is enough to gain support of over 35% of voters, with 65% of votes being thereby put to the shredder, and the views of the citizens being dumped into the garbage can. The introduction of single-seat constituencies will result in the emergence of the two-party system, which will mean choosing between the PO

Pobrane z czasopisma Mediatizations Studies **http://mediatization.umcs.pl**
Data: 23/11/2026 10:07:38

(Civic Platform) and PiS (Law and Justice). […] This will cause the breakup of the country into two. Single-seat constituencies will open the path to the Sejm to local oligarchs [*Free referendum broadcasts of the Democratic Left Alliance* 2015].

The "Generations" Association, in turn, argued in the following way why, they believed, the first referendum question about consent to single-seat constituencies was unacceptable:

> This is a proposal only for the strongest parties. The elimination of the opposition, destruction of democracy, paving the way for power for the wealthiest. Elections in single-seat constituencies are highly unjust. They create a system of the monopoly of the largest political parties while they do not reflect the views of many other social strata and communities of the Poles [*Free referendum broadcasts of the "Generations" Association*].

Two entities raised the issue contained in the question no. 1 in their broadcasts but took no stance on it.

The percentage breakdown of the suggested answers to the question no. 1 is shown in Chart 4.

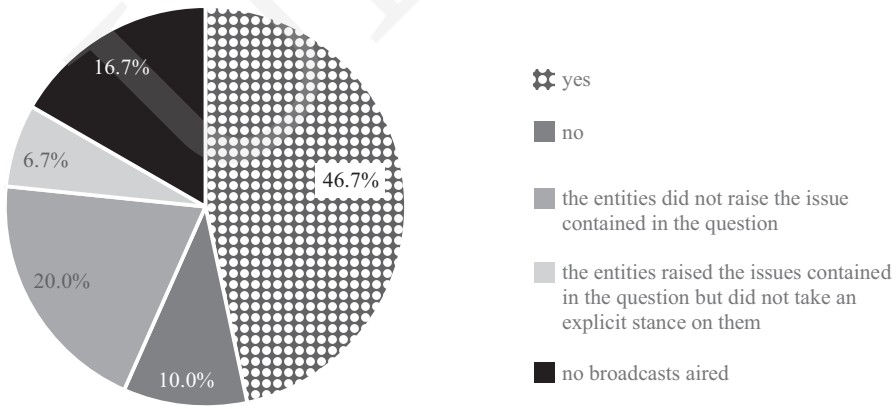

Chart 4. The answer to Question One suggested by the entitled entities (Part II)
Source: Author's own research.

Chart 5 shows that 6 entities took an explicitly negative stand on the question of funding political parties form the State budget: the Local Activity Foundation, Institute of State Thought, Civic Platform of the Republic of Poland, The OUTRAGED Association, Fighting Solidarity Association, and the "Community" Association. The arguments for their opposition against funding political parties from the State budget were *inter alia*: the need for the parties to operate for their own rather than the taxpayer's money

Pobrane z czasopisma Mediatizations Studies **http://mediatization.umcs.pl**
Data: 23/11/2026 10:07:38

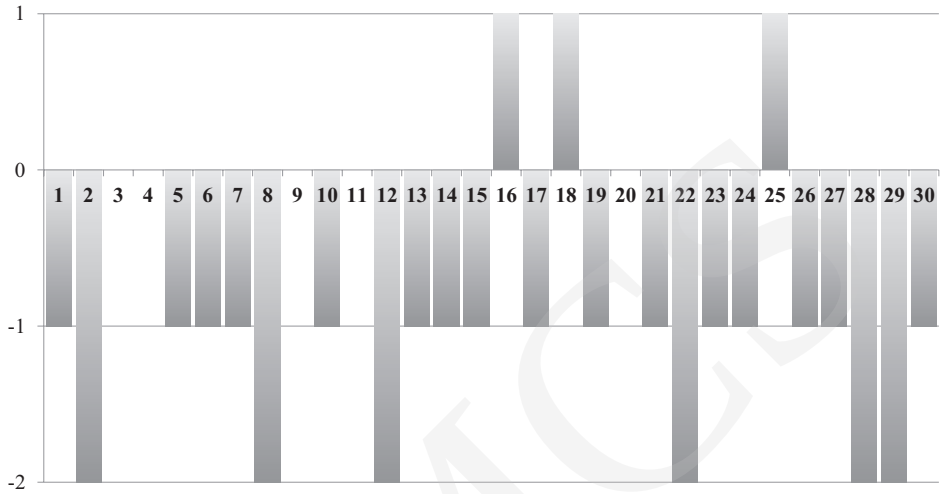

Chart 5. The answer to Question Two suggested by the entitled entities
Source: Author's own research.

[*Free referendum broadcastsof the Local Activity Foundation* 2015], refusal to accept the situation when the taxpayer's money is used, for example, for the private security of party chairpersons [*Free referendum broadcasts of the Institute of State Thought* 2015], more important purposes for which public funds should be expended than for campaign balloons and billboards [*Free referendum broadcasts of the Civic Platform of the Republic of Poland* 2015], refusal to consent to politicians wasting money on grandiose election campaigns when some citizens do not have enough money for bare necessities [*Free referendum broadcasts of The OUTRAGED Association* 2015], the wish to regain millions of zlotys in grants from politicians [*Free referendum broadcasts of the Fighting Solidarity Association* 2015] and the refusal to support party spongers [*Free referendum broadcasts of the "Community" Association* 2015].

Three entities raised the questions connected with funding political parties in their broadcasts but they did not explicitly advise the audience how to vote on this issue. The remaining entities of those that aired their broadcasts did not take a stance on the issue raised in the question no. 2.

The percentage breakdown of suggested answers to the question no. 2 is shown in Chart 6.

Chart 7 shows that 8 entities urged the listeners, in their broadcasts, to vote for the introduction of the general principle of resolving doubts about the interpretation of tax law provisions in favor of the taxpayer. Representatives of these entities did not differ much in their arguments. They stressed that they did not want the Polish taxpayer to be treated as a criminal (Local Activity Foundation), and that the citizens needed exactly the changes in the law like the proposal put forward in the referendum question no. 3 (the Hummingbird Association). Some entities emphasized that the

Pobrane z czasopisma Mediatizations Studies **http://mediatization.umcs.pl**
Data: 23/11/2026 10:07:38

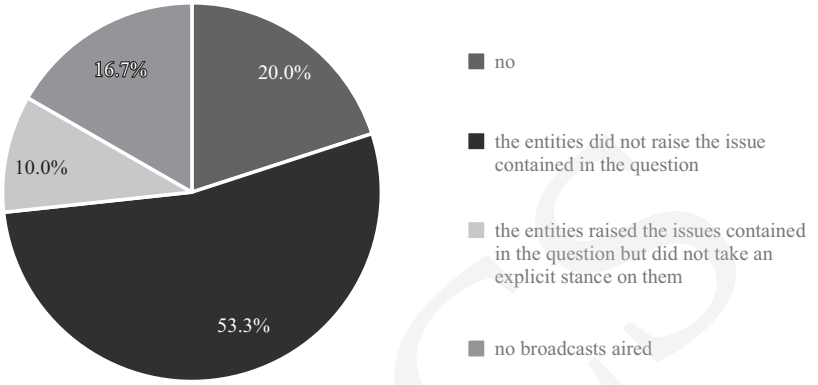

Chart 6. The answer to Question Two suggested by the entitled entities (Part II)
Source: Author's own research

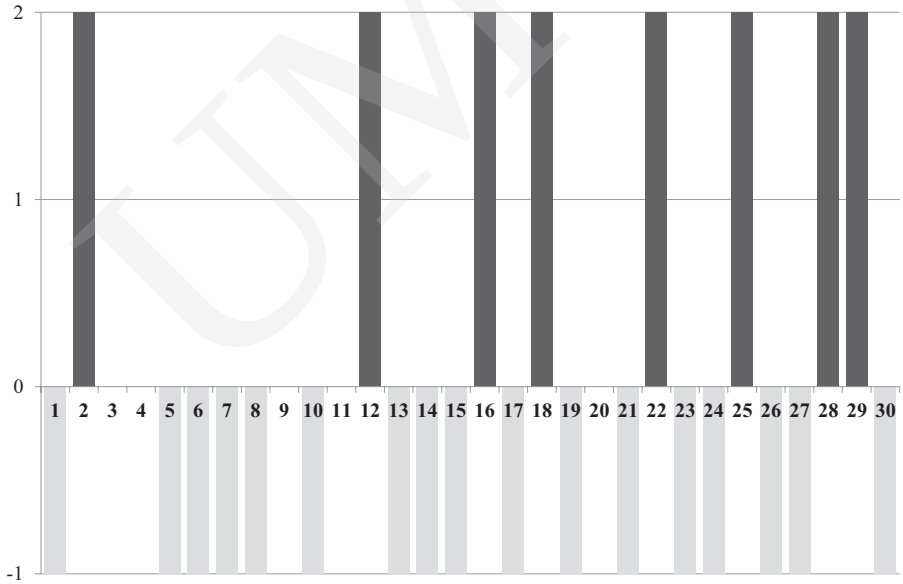

Chart 7. The answer to Question Three suggested by the entitled entities
Source: Author's own research.

answer to the referendum question no. 3 was self-evident: "certainly, in this situation we will all vote for resolving doubts in favor of the taxpayer" (the Roman Dmowski National Association and The OUTRAGED Association).

The remaining entities of those that aired their broadcasts did not take a stance on this issue.

The majority of the entities that aired their broadcasts encouraged the listeners to participate in the September referendum (23 entities out of 25) even despite, as they

Pobrane z czasopisma Mediatizations Studies **http://mediatization.umcs.pl**
Data: 23/11/2026 10:07:38

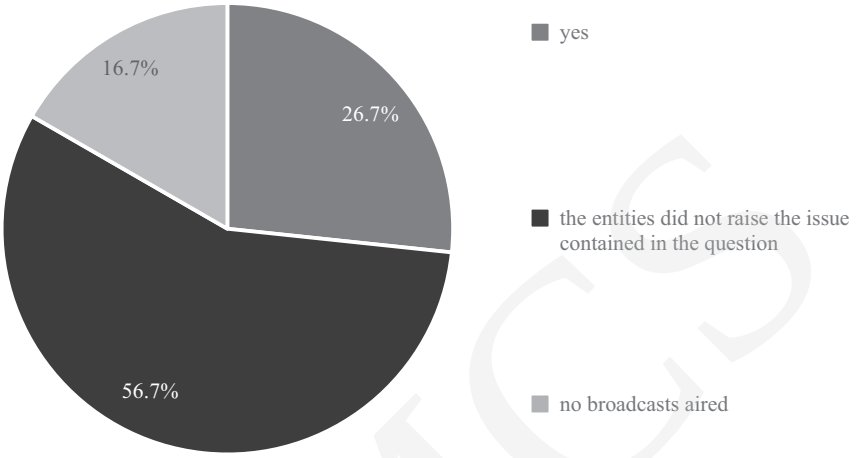

Chart 8. The answer to Question Three suggested by the entitled entities (Part II)
Source: Author's own research.

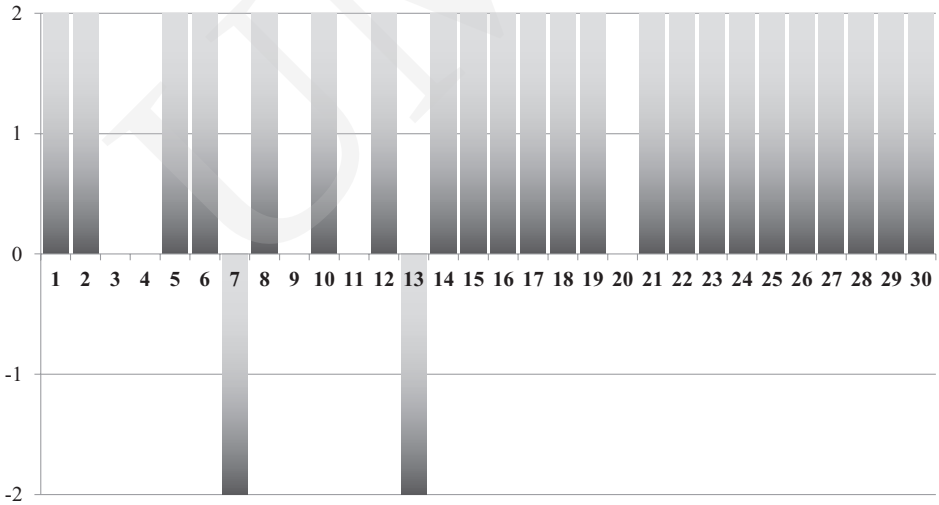

Chart 9. Encouraging voters by the entitled entities to participate in the referendum
Source: Author's own research.

stressed, many doubts [*Free referendum broadcasts of the European Institute for Studies and Analyses in Lublin* 2015]. The most frequent argument was that a referendum is one of the forms of direct democracy that allows citizens to express their views on important questions, and, consequently, it should be made use of. Only two entities advised the listeners against participating in the referendum; they were the Freedom and Hope Foundation and the Polish People's Party (PSL).

Pobrane z czasopisma Mediatizations Studies **http://mediatization.umcs.pl**
Data: 23/11/2026 10:07:38

The Freedom and Hope Foundation explained its objection as follows:

> The Civic Platform politicians argue that the referendum is justified. We – the anti-system representatives – have a different view on the subject. President Bronisław Komorowski took an opportunistic approach to the referendum. He announced it after the first round of the presidential election only because he achieved weaker results than Andrzej Duda. The President had as many as five years to take the initiative and hold a referendum. Not only on the three issues, but also on others of special significance for Poland. He did not do it earlier but only at the end of his term, influenced by political emotions. This move has little to do with a sincere wish to learn the citizens' opinions, and, therefore, it has no chances of success. The referendum was called in a political context, and the questions are badly worded. Deciding to announce a referendum, Bronisław Komorowski did this in panic after the first election round because he hoped for support from the voters of Paweł Kukiz, who made a name for himself on the demand for single-seat constituencies. Komorowski failed and lost the election, but the referendum remained. This political lifeline is going to cost us as much as a hundred million zloty […]. At the moment we have three referendum questions: a non-constitutional question, an imprecise one, and a question that is no longer topical. We appeal for boycotting the referendum and staying at home. There is no point taking part in this political pretence [*Free referendum broadcasts, the Freedom and Hope Foundation* 2015].

The PSL's negative attitude to the referendum was known before the time of airing free broadcasts of the entitled entities in the public media. The PSL Chairman, Janusz Piechociński, appealed in his letter to President Duda that the referendum be cancelled and the money be used to support farmers [Janicki 2015, p. 14], which is why he reiterated in the radio broadcasts: "Mr. President, it is time to annul this referendum, and allot the funds for fighting against the drought". On the radio, he was supported by the Sejm MP Piotr Zgorzelski:

> Do we really have to spend over a hundred million on a referendum that will change nothing? We suggest that the money be handed over to our fellow countrymen affected by this year's drought. Today, the funding of political parties is transparent. Do we want politicians to be kept on a string by shady businessmen? So, dear fellow citizens, let's give up on this referendum [*Free referendum broadcasts, the Polish People's Party* 2015].

Conclusions

Before the investigation began, the main hypothesis was formulated which assumed that the entitled entities used their allocated air time to promote themselves by presenting the name of a given entity in the public space at the expense of explaining the issues raised in the referendum questions.

Pobrane z czasopisma Mediatizations Studies **http://mediatization.umcs.pl**
Data: 23/11/2026 10:07:38

On the basis of specific questions, specific hypotheses were formulated:

H1 – The entities present in the broadcasts did not advise taking part in the referendum.

H2 – In the broadcasts, the entities did not take a stance on the questions and did not suggest the answers to individual questions.

H3 – In most cases, the entities did not fully use the allotted air time.

The foregoing hypotheses were verified as a result of the conducted studies.

Hypothesis 1, which assumed that the entities present in the broadcasts did not advise taking part in the referendum was verified negatively. Out of the 30 entitled entities, 25 aired their own referendum broadcasts, of which as many as 23 encouraged participation in the September referendum.

Hypothesis 2, which assumed that in the broadcasts the entities did not take a stance on the questions and did not suggest what answers should be given to individual questions, was verified positively. Representatives of individual entities eagerly expressed their views on the issues raised in the referendum question no.1. However, also in this case, few more than a half of the entitled entities suggested a specific answer to the listeners: 46.7% – the "yes" answer, and 10 % – the "no" answer. In practice, only 6 entities (20%) took a stance on the referendum question no. 2, suggesting that the listeners give a negative answer and presenting arguments for such an answer. In their broadcasts, three other entities raised the issues connected with the problem mentioned in the question, but they did not explicitly advise the listeners how they should vote on the matter. The remaining entities of those that aired their broadcasts did not take a stance on the issue raised in the question no. 2. In the case of the referendum question no. 3, only 8 entities (26.7%) discussed the raised issue in their broadcasts and suggested how the listeners should answer the question: all the 8 entities encouraged the listeners to vote for the introduction of the principle presented in the question no. 3.

Hypothesis 3, which assumed that in most cases the entities did not fully use the allotted air time was also verified positively. Barely 11 (36.7%) of the 30 entities entitled to air free referendum broadcasts on Radio Lublin used 100% of their allocated time, which means the airing of all 8 broadcasts per entity. Five entities did not use their allocated broadcasting time at all despite the fact that they had earlier completed all formalities and been granted free air time on Radio Lublin. The remaining 14 entities used their allocated air time to different degrees, ranging from 50% do 87.5%.

In view of the foregoing, the main hypothesis that the entitled entities used their allocated air time to promote themselves by presenting the name of a given entity in the public space at the expense of explaining the issues raised in the referendum questions was verified positively. The entities explained to the listeners the issues raised in the referendum questions only to a negligible extent; in most questions they focused merely on the issue of single-seat constituencies in the question no. 1. Although they voluntarily applied for the allocation of free broadcasting time on

Pobrane z czasopisma Mediatizations Studies **http://mediatization.umcs.pl**
Data: 23/11/2026 10:07:38

Radio Lublin, they did not fully use the allotted time. Five entities did not air any broadcasts on the radio; however, because they had earlier applied for participation in the referendum campaign, the name of a given entity, even of one that did not air any referendum broadcast, appeared in a given block of broadcasts by the entitled entities as many as 3 times[6], which was a kind of promotion and popularization of the name of the entity – a foundation or an association. Also the entities that aired their own broadcasts did not fully use them to popularize and explain the issues raised in the referendum questions. Some of them utilized the free air time to promote their own activities, to acquaint the listeners with what they (entities) did on a daily basis.

With reference to the question included in the title it needs to be stated that the entitled entities utilized allocated broadcast time for their own promotion at the expense of clarification of the referendum issues. The present article is only an introduction to further studies on the use of free air time in the public media by the entitled entities.

Bibliography

Auditory sources
(figures given after the dates and before nos. denote the time of airing the broadcast):

Free referendum broadcasts of the European Institute for Studies and Analyses in Lublin, of: 21 August 2015, 9.30, no. 1; 21 August 2015, 21.10, no. 8; 23 August 2015, 19.10, no. 5; 23 August 2015, 19.10, no. 10; 24 August 2015, 21.10, no. 2; 1 September 2015, 13.30, no. 3; 1 September 2015, 21.10, no. 10; 2 September 2015, 21.10, no. 5.

Free referendum broadcasts of the Local Activity Foundation, of: 26 August 2015, 9.30, no. 3; 28 August 2015, 13.30, no. 1;31 August 2015, 21.10, no. 5; 2 September 2015, 13.30, no. 3; 2 September 2015, 21.10, no. 1; 4 September 2015, 9.30, no. 1; 4 September 2015, 13.30, no. 1.

Free referendum broadcasts of the Institute of Civic Studies Obywatele [Citizens] 24.pl Foundation, of: 24 August 2015, 13.30, no. 2; 25 August 2015, 21.10, no. 2; 26 August 2015, 21.10, no. 9; 27 August 2015, 21.10, no. 1; 29 August 2015, 21.10, no. 2; 29 August 2015, 21.10, no. 7; 30 August 2015, 19.10, no. 5; 1 September 2015, 13.30, no. 2.

Free referendum broadcasts of the Foundation for the Promotion of Mediation and Legal Education LEX NOSTRA, of: 22 August 2015, 13.30, no. 2; 25 August 2015, 9.30, no. 1; 25 August 2015, 13.30, no. 1; 26 August 2015, 21.10, no. 1; 27 August 2015, 21.10, no. 8; 30 August 2015, 19.10, no. 6; 3 September 2015, 21.10, no. 3.

Free referendum broadcasts of the Freedom and Hope Foundation, of: 27 August 2015, 13.30, no. 1; 28 August 2015, 21.10, no. 1; 29 August 2015, 21.10, no. 1, 6; 30 August 2015, 19.10, no. 3; 1 September 2015, 9.30, no. 1; 2 September 2015, 21.10, no. 2.

[6] At the beginning of the broadcast block of the entitled entities, then in its course, when the voice-over informed that the broadcast of a given entity was not delivered or not recorded, and again at the end of the block.

Pobrane z czasopisma Mediatizations Studies **http://mediatization.umcs.pl**
Data: 23/11/2026 10:07:38

Free referendum broadcasts of the Institute of State Thought, of: 26 August 2015, 21.10, no. 7; 27 August 2015, 21.10, no. 10; 1 September 2015, 21.10, no. 1; 3 September 2015, 13.30, no. 2; 3 September 2015, 21.10, no. 8, 9.

Free referendum broadcasts of the Civic Platform of the Republic of Poland, of: 26 August 2015, 9.30, no. 2; 27 August 2015, 21.10, no. 9; 29 August 2015, 21.10, no. 4; 31 August 2015, 9.30, no. 1; 2 September 2015, 9.30, no. 2; 3 September 2015, 21.10, no. 1, 6.

Free referendum broadcasts of the Polish People's Party, of: 25 August 2015, 21.10, no. 9; 28 August 2015, 13.30, no. 2; 1 September 2015, 13.30, no. 1; 2 September 2015, 21.10, no. 4; 3 September 2015, 21.10, no. 4; 4 September 2015, 21.10, no. 1.

Free referendum broadcasts of the Arche Project, of: 23 August 2015, 13.45, no. 2; 26 August 2015, 21.10, no. 10; 31 August 2015, 9.30, no. 3; 31 August 2015, 21.10, no. 7; 4 September 2015, 21.10, no. 8.

Free referendum broadcasts of the Democratic Left Alliance, of: 24 August 2015, 21.10, no. 10; 25 August 2015, 9.30, no. 3; 26 August 2015, 13.30, no. 3; 27 August 2015, 9.30, no. 2; 29 August 2015, 7.40, no. 3; 1 September 2015, 21.10, no. 3; 3 September 2015, 9.30, no. 3; 4 September 2015, 21.10, no. 7.

Free referendum broadcasts of the Hummingbird Association, of: 25 August 2015, 21.10, no. 8; 28 August 2015, 21.10, no. 7; 31 August 2015, 13.30, no. 1; 31 August 2015, 21.10, no. 3, 8; 1 September 2015, 21.10, no. 8; 2 September 2015, 21.10, no. 9; 4 September 2015, 21.10, no. 4.

Free referendum broadcasts of the Civic Committee of the City of Koszalin Association, of: 23 August 2015, 19.10, no. 1, 7; 26 August 2015, 21.10, no. 6; 30 August 2015, 13.45, no. 1; 2 September 2015, 9.30, no. 3; 4 September 2015, 21.10, no. 6.

Free referendum broadcasts of the Roman Dmowski National Association, of: 24 August 2015, 21.10, no. 6, 8; 1 September 2015, 21.10, no. 5; 2 September 2015, 21.10, no. 3, 6, 7; 3 September 2015, 13.30, no. 3; 4 September 2015, 21.10, no. 9.

Free referendum broadcasts of the Association for the Development of the Village of Wietrzno "Wiatr" ["Wind"], of: 24 August 2015, 9.30, no. 3; 25 August 2015, 21.10, no. 7; 27 August 2015, 13.30, no. 3; 30 August 2015, 19.10, no. 7; 1 September 2015, 21.10, no. 9; 4 September 2015, 13.30, no. 2; 4 September 2015, 21.10, no. 3.

Free referendum broadcasts of the Association for Changing the Electoral System – Single-Seat Constituencies, of: 23 August 2015, 13.45, no. 1; 23 August 2015, 19.10, no. 9; 24 August 2015, 9.30, no. 2; 24 August 2015, 21.10, no. 5; 25 August 2015, 9.30, no. 2; 29 August 2015, 21.10, no. 3; 1 September 2015, 9.30, no. 2; 2 September 2015, 21.10, no. 8.

Free referendum broadcasts of the Our Common Silesian Home Association, of: 21 August 2015, 9.30, no. 3; 21 August 2015, 21.10, no. 4; 23 August 2015, 19.10, no. 6; 25 August 2015, 21.10, no. 4; 28 August 2015, 21.10, no. 3; 30 August 2015, 19.10, no. 10; 1 September 2015, 21.10, no. 4; 3 September 2015, 9.30, no. 2.

Free referendum broadcasts of The OUTRAGED Association, of: 21 August 2015, 21.10, no. 6; 24 August 2015, 21.10, no. 9; 28 August 2015, 9.30, no. 3; 30 August 2015, 13.45, no. 2; 30 August 2015, 19.10, no. 8; 1 September 2015, 21.10, no. 2; 4 September 2015, 9.30, no. 2; 4 September 2015, 9.30, no. 3.

Free referendum broadcasts of the "Citizens against Lawlessness" Association, of: 23 August 2015, 19.10, no. 3; 25 August 2015, 21.10, no. 10; 26 August 2015, 21.10, no. 3; 27 August 2015, 13.30, no. 2; 28 August 2015, 21.10, no. 4; 30 August 2015, 19.10, no. 1; 31 August 2015, 21.10, no. 4; 3 September 2015, 21.10, no. 5.

Free referendum broadcasts of the Patriotic and Self-Government Association "Fatherland – Family – Justice", of: 27 August 2015, 9.30, no. 1; 28 August 2015, 13.30, no. 3; 28 August 2015, 28 August 2015, 21.10, no. 5, 9; 29 August 2015, 21.10, no. 5, 8.

Pobrane z czasopisma Mediatizations Studies **http://mediatization.umcs.pl**
Data: 23/11/2026 10:07:38

Free referendum broadcasts of the "Generations" Association, of: 21 August 2015, 13.30, no. 3; 22 August 2015, 21.10, no. 9; 26 August 2015, 13.30, no. 2; 26 August 2015, 21.10, no. 2; 28 August 2015, 9.30, no. 2; 29 August 2015, 13.30, no. 1; 31 August 2015, 21.10, no. 2; 4 September 2015, 21.10, no. 2.

Free referendum broadcasts of the Association for the Development of the Settlement of Zając, Commune of Liw and the Neighboring Area "LEPUS", of: 23 August 2015, 19.10, no. 8; 24 August 2015, 9.30, no. 1; 25 August 2015, 21.10, no. 1; 27 August 2015, 21.10, no. 2; 31 August 2015, 13.30, no. 2; 1 September 2015, 21.10, no. 6; 3 September 2015, 21.10, no. 10.

Free referendum broadcasts of the Solidary 2010 Association, of: 23 August 2015, 7.40, no. 3; 26 August 2015, 13.30, no. 1; 26 August 2015, 21.10, no. 8; 30 August 2015, 19.10, no. 4; 31August 2015, 21.10, no. 10; 1 September 2015, 21.10, no. 7; 3 September 2015, 21.10, no. 2; 4 September 2015, 21.10, no. 10.

Free referendum broadcasts of the Fighting Solidarity Association, of: 23 August 2015, 19.10, no. 4; 24 August 2015, 21.10 no. 3; 25 August 2015, 21.10, no. 5; 26 August 2015, 21.10, no. 5; 28 August 2015, 21.10, no. 6; 29 August 2015, 7.40, no. 1; 29 August 2015, 13.30, no. 2; 30 August 2015, 13.45, no. 3.

Free referendum broadcasts of the "Community" Association, of: 21 August 2015, 21.10, no. 1; 22 August 2015, 21.10, no. 7; 24 August 2015, 13.30, no. 1; 24 August 2015, 21.10, no. 7.

Free referendum broadcasts of "The Most Important" Foundation, of: 23 August 2015, 7.40 no. 2; 24 August 2015, 21.10, no. 4; 25 August 2015, 13.30, no. 3; 26 August 2015, 21.10, no. 4; 27 August 2015, 21.10, no. 5, 6; 31 August 2015, 9.30, no. 2.

Books, scientific and press articles:

Castells, M. (2009). *Siła tożsamości*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN.

Dąbrowska, A. (2015). Koncert życzeń, *Polityka*, vol. 36, pp. 13–14.

Janicki, M. (2015). Referenda dwa, czyli polityczne trzy po trzy, *Polityka*, vol. 35, pp. 12–14.

Kolczyński, M. (2014). Strategic Dilemmas of Pre-Election Marketing in the Age of the Mediatisation of Politics: The Case of the Warsaw Referendum of 2013, *Studia Politicae Universitatis Silesiensis*, vol. 13, pp. 139–150.

Michalczyk, S. (2010). *Demokracja medialna. Teoretyczna analiza problemu*, Toruń: Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek.

Olczyk, E. (2015). Jak skompromitować referendum, *Wprost*, vol. 35, pp. 14–15.

Ostrowski, M. (2015). Czy wolałbyś być Szwajcarem?, *Polityka*, vol. 36, pp. 52–53.

Piasecki, A.K. (2012). *Wybory w Polsce 1989–2011*, Kraków: Arcana.

Skórzyński, J. (2015). Apetyt na referenda, *Polityka*, vol. 35, p. 58.

Szacki, W. (2015). Koncertowa wtopa, *Polityka*, vol. 37, pp. 14–15.

Ustawa z dnia 14 marca 2003 r. o referendum ogólnokrajowym [National Referendum Act of 14 March 2003], Dz.U. [Journal of Laws] 2003, No. 57, item 507 as amended.

Internet sources:

Referendum Ogólnokrajowe 6 września 2015, Państwowa Komisja Wyborcza, http://referendum2015.pkw.gov.pl/341_Polska [access: 10.09.2016].

Sandecki, M. *Cel: zarobić i się wypromować, czyli co wspólnego z referendum 6 września ma Stowarzyszenie na rzecz Rozwoju Wsi Wietrzno "Wiatr" czy Zielony Kraków*, http://wyborcza.pl/1,75398,18608895,cel-zarobic-i-wypromowac-sie-czyli-co-wspolnego-z-referendum.html [access: 4.09.2016].