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**Country: Poland**

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The Polish ultra-right protestors [made global headlines](#) last November when they marched through Warsaw calling for “White Europe”, “Pure Poland” and “Refugees, get out!”. Not long afterwards, the ruling Law and Justice party proposed [a controversial Holocaust law](#) that forbids “Polish death camps” or suggesting “publicly and against the facts” that the Polish nation or state was complicit in Nazi Germany’s crimes.

With 60,000 people chanting antisemitic, Islamophobic, anti-gay and anti-migrant slogans, Poland is one of the European countries turning towards right-wing populism and normalising discriminatory discourse in the public sphere. The Media Diversity Institute (MDI) is exploring the role of the media ahead of the panel [“Fascism is back. Is journalism part of the problem or of a solution?”](#) at the International Journalism Festival in Perugia on 13 April 2018.

By questioning the role of some media in the past events, MDI is hoping to initiate a debate on possible answers to extremism of all kinds while together with its European partners it has been engaged in countering religious hate incidents against Muslims, Jewish and Christian communities through the [Get the Trolls Out project](#).

To understand the roots of Poland's shift to the far-right, award-winning freelance journalist and film director [Krzysztof Dzieciolowski](#) explained in an interview for MDI that the right-wing government is successful because it has found the [key](#) in restoring “the pride that the Poles were longing for”.

“I think that the media coverage of the National march in November 2017 was very polarised. You have liberal media outlets who have called it “the March of Ultranationalists” but the march also portrays what the Polish people want, as Poles want to feel the national pride right now,” Dzieciolowski tells MDI.

One of the reasons for the rise of far-right rhetoric in Poland is the public broadcaster which was [put under direct control of the government](#) in January 2016. “The Polish public radio and TV have always been under control of the governing party. But the governing Law and Justice Party now wants to reshape the structure of the Polish society and the media as one of the elements of the puzzle”.

A former the Financial Times correspondent from Warsaw, [Krzysztof Bobiński](#), talked to MDI about the public service media that are [controlled](#) by the government as its propaganda tool.

“The private media, newspapers, TV stations are pretty much the opposite. They can say what

they like. The government gets very [angry and frustrated](#) because of that, but the fact that the private media outlets criticise the Polish government does not seem to affect its political standing," Bobiński says.

In Dzieciolowski's opinion, the pre-1989 divisions in the Polish society and the opposition that eventually took power in Poland, as well as the rise of social media are the two key elements why Polish politics are polarised. "In a deeply divided society when media outlets become increasingly more polarised, day by day editors and op-eds writers try to be more and more on the harsher and harder side and in this way the language of the public debate is becoming radicalised."

"The reason why media are moving to the right in Poland is because for a number of years the right-wing view agenda has been pretty much politically insignificant, it did not really exist. Historically in 1989 that was a crucial moment with the creation of free press in Poland and then for a moment the right-wing parties had their outlets but the trouble is that they were not politically very strong and their outlets were not either."

Bobiński on the other side emphasises the involvement of the Polish youth in ultra-right movements and the tolerant reception of these views within the Polish society. The question is what the rise of far-right can bring in the future. The uncertainty of possible answers calls for greater responsibility of the media and professional journalism.

MDI will host a panel on the role of the media in the rise of far-right. Join us at the International Journalism Festival in Perugia on 13 April or follow @MDI\_UK and #ijf2018.

*Related Articles:* [The Role of the Media in the Rise of Austrian Far-Right](#)