1. Works on implementation to the Polish electoral system democratic electoral standards have proceeded, with a varying intensity, since political transformation in 1990 until 2000. Changes made in 2000 – 2010 aimed more at improvement of existing electoral institutions than implementation of new solutions. Since in this year the Electoral Code was passed, that comprehensively regulates the electoral procedures for all general elections conducted in Poland: of the President of the Republic of Poland, to the Parliament (Sejm and Senate), deputies to the European Parliament and local authorities. Regulations included in the Electoral Code confirmed previous legal solutions and electoral institutions, unifying rules and procedures in the area of organizing and conducting elections.

2. Basic rules of Polish electoral system to the extent of managing elections are as follows:
   1) Entrusting the management of elections to independent electoral bodies. This personal composition has been therefore based on judges due to their independence from the representatives of the executive and legislative powers and legal ban on participation in any political party or involvement in any political activity.
   2) conferring the electoral authorities, according to the level in territorial structure, a status of a body working on a permanent basis and not only in elections’ periods. It was rightly stated that the functioning of such a body limited by time framework: from the date of ordering elections to the date of finding of their results, could lead to a certain attenuation of the sense of responsibility, also in the eyes of the public. It corresponds with the principles that an institution at a higher level creates a personal composition of an institution at a lower level, while the electoral body sets its internal composition itself.
   3) Providing electoral institutions with their own executive body and guaranteeing them adequate financial resources for the performance of duties relating to
elections where their amount and control of expenditure is independent from the executive power, constituted the third element of the independent electoral institutions’ construction.

As a result of the above, the system of electoral institutions for the elections to the Parliament (Sejm and Senate), elections of the President of the Republic of Poland and elections to the European Parliament, consists of:

- at the national level: National Electoral Commission as a supreme and standing electoral institution in charge of all elections and referenda.

  It consists of nine judges of the supreme courts and tribunals. They are indicated by three presidents: of the Constitutional Tribunal, of the Supreme Court and of the Supreme Administrative Court, and then appointed by the President of the Republic of Poland. This appointment is without time limit and in practice it means that members of the National Electoral Commission perform their duties as long as they exercise the office of the judge (until the age of 70). Members of the National Electoral Commission perform their duties relating to elections independently from performing judge’s duties.

  The National Electoral Commission designates a chairman and two vice-chairmen among its members;

- as an intermediary level of electoral institutions there are constituency electoral commissions. They do not work on a permanent basis and they are appointed for each election. They consist exclusively of common courts judges from the region. Candidates for these offices are put up by the Minister of Justice however it is the National Electoral Commission that appoints them. Commissions at the intermediary level are subordinate exclusively to the National Electoral Commission and they are in charge of registering the candidates for the MPs as well as of the preparation, organization and pursuance of elections at their territories (within their electoral districts);

  Temporary character of these commissions is related mainly to the principle of proportionality of elections to Sejm; in case of an expiration of an MP’s mandate, the following candidate from the list takes the place. As for the second chamber of Parliament (Senate), even though as a matter of principle supplementary elections are organized, such situations are so rare, that it does not constitute a sufficient justification of a permanent character of electoral district commissions;
at the lowest level, common for all general elections, there are **district electoral commissions** appointed separately for each elections out of the voters and persons sent there by political parties. There are no judges in district electoral boards; they are social institutions, their aims are limited to the organization of voting in their circuit and finding results.

One of the characteristics of the functioning of lower level electoral institutions is their subordination to the National Electoral Commission with regard to the unified application of electoral law provisions. Explanations and interpretations submitted by the National Electoral Commission are binding for the lower level commissions; they must obey to its directives.

On the other hand, performance of duties by the National Electoral Commission is under the exclusive control of the Supreme Court which 1) considers – in the cases determined by law – claims against the national Electoral Commission’s activity as to the observance of legal provisions as well as 2) elections’ validity.

The National Electoral Commission and electoral district commissions have an executive body - an electoral institution working on a permanent basis – the **National Electoral Office**, which has 49 departments in the voievodships. National Electoral Office is managed by the Head that is appointed and dismissed by the National Electoral Commission. He is also, ex officio, a secretary of the National Electoral Commission and participates in its meetings as counsel. Any of the employees of the National Electoral Office, including its Head, cannot be associated in any political party or perform political activity in any other form.

The National Electoral Office independently drafts budget projects and manages the financial resources for the activity of the National Electoral Commission as well as for its own activity – budget’s amount is dependent only on the Parliament; government may not question it.

The practice so far allows to come to the conclusion that the system of electoral institutions consisting of the standing National Electoral Commission with the judges’ composition as well as intermediary (constituency) commissions has been successful. The independence of these institutions, their objectiveness, resistance to the pressure or influences from other State institutions or politicians have never been challenged.
Another important factor is that no legal aspects of their activity have ever been successfully challenged.

In the local elections, due to their particular character and three levels of local self-government (voivodships, districts (powiat) and communities), the situation is slightly different.

Apart from the National Electoral Commission, the same as for the elections to the Parliament, of the President of the Republic of Poland and to the European Parliament, there are two divisions. The first division consists of standing one-person institutions: electoral commissioners that are appointed out of judges, for the period of five years by the National Electoral Commission (on the Minister of Justice motion). The same person may be re-appointed for this office only once and performs its duties independently from exercising judge’s office. An electoral commissioner is the National Electoral Commission’s proxy designated for a part of a voivodship. Electoral commissioners (there are 51 of them) organize local elections and supervise the process according to the binding law. They are, moreover, on the ground of other electoral laws, the chairmen of the electoral district commissions in the parliamentary and presidential elections and to the European Parliament.

The second division consists of electoral commissions: at the level of voivodships, districts (powiat) and communities (municipalities) as well as district electoral commissions which are in charge of a direct organization of elections at a particular level of self-government. Voivodship, constituency and municipal electoral commissions’ chairman’s office is exercised ex officio by a judge designated by the chairman of the common court from this territory. Other members of these commissions are appointed among persons proposed by political parties. District electoral commissions are composed exclusively of voters and persons designated by political parties. These commissions do not work on a permanent basis and therefore are appointed for every elections.

3. The characteristic of Polish elections is also entrusting courts with resolving issues regarding electoral rights and stating the validity of elections, with the right to fully or partially invalidate or validate elections.
Correctness of the conduction of the elections is carried out both to the extent of creating the lists of voters (rolls of voters), during the process of registering the electoral committees and the candidates as well as after the determination of results of the voting and of elections.

The activities of the electoral authorities related to the registration of the electoral committees and the candidates are subjected to the oversight by the higher rank authorities while the key of them are subjected to the legal audit.

The primary tool while verifying the correctness of the elections and determining their results is the right to raise the electoral protests.

Committing an electoral crime or violation of the electoral law in the course of the voting, determining its results or the results of the elections may give rise to the electoral protest. Entities authorized to raise the protests include the electoral committees, the commissions and the electors.

The election protests are filed with the courts: with respect to the elections for the state authorities and the national referenda — with the Supreme Court, while with respect to the local elections - with the district courts.

The courts considering the protests establish the actual situation and if a breach of the law is ascertained, they assess whether it had influence on the result of the elections. If the court decides it has – it nullifies the elections in the scope resulting from the established violation of the law and orders that the defective election activities or elections are repeated.

The court decisions are binding upon the electoral authorities which are obliged to execute the decisions concerning repetition of the election activities.

4. The present works on improving Polish electoral law are oriented above all to ensure that all groups of voters have the possibility to unimpeded participation in elections and such solutions in the sphere of implementation of alternative voting methods are the main purpose for that. Beside basic form of voting, which is personal voting, voting by proxy for elderly people (after the age of 75), voting for persons with confirmed handicapped status and correspondence voting (by mail) are being implemented. This latter form of voting will be available for all voters, and not as so far, only for out-of-country voters.
Disabled voters, irrespective of the disability will be able to vote by mail only in elections of local authorities. A concept of departing the idea of creating polling stations abroad for benefit of correspondence voting is being considered.

Clearly noticeable is also direction for creating polling stations, which meet the needs of disabled voters. The main goal is to adapt all polling stations to the needs of those voters.

Similarly, to the greater extent electoral authorities attach importance to the process of informing voters about elections and their rights, including the method of reaching with information to voters with vision and hearing impairment.

5. Second, fundamental direction of changes in organization and conduction of elections is increased use of information techniques and technologies in elections.

Results of voting are supposed to be transmitted in the system of electoral authorities and not as so far in the form of documents (protocols) drawn by hand on paper, but electronic documents bearing a secure digital signature. This will definitely shorten the waiting time of society and public opinion for official results.

6. There is, however, so far no political factor will to undertake works connected with the use of internet voting systems or so-called electronic ballot box.