The authors focus on the professionalization of big-city political elites. They indicate that the opportunity for taking up leadership positions in city councils is, first of all, positively associated with the professionalism of politicians. Secondly, the authors refer to concepts of intellectual-technocratic professionalization and political-party professionalization, and characterize politicians in different leadership positions in city councils. There is a clear relationship between party professionalization and the function of the club chairperson in the council, whereas a weaker relationship can be observed between technocratic professionalization and the committee chairperson. It seems that there are systematic, but mutually unrelated paths to individual positions in Polish big-city politics. This means that professional specialization occurs early in elite careers.

**Key words:** political elites, professionalization, political career, big cities