

Media Monitoring Center

The Media Monitoring Center (MMC) played a key role in the MEC's effectiveness during the 1998 election period. For the first time, the MEC used the MMC's statistics in a both a quantitative and qualitative manner to ensure compliance with the *PEC Rules and Regulations*. The MMC's data was extremely effective in guiding and informing the MEC's decisions and served as a key tool in achieving the MEC's overall mandate.

Monitoring Before the Start of the Election Campaign

Before the campaign period began in BiH, monitoring was focused on providing the OSCE and other international organizations with news summaries that gave an overview of the political situation, with monitoring for inflammatory language and/or hate speech. Select media monitors decided that, in addition to this qualitative approach, it would be possible to quantitatively measure certain aspects of radio and television programming. By the time the election campaign period gained momentum, media monitoring was producing Daily Reports, which provided news summaries and daily data: the amount of time dedicated during main news or political programs to political units or personalities; and the number of mentions made of the candidate or party. This quantitative information was depicted in graphic format.

Three Weeks Before the Elections

During the election campaign it was determined that the MEC should have data regarding major broadcasters and stations with histories of violations. This information was to be statistically significant, and used to demonstrate quantitatively the amount of coverage given to certain parties and politicians.

The *PEC Rules and Regulations* stated that during the campaign period that media shall give fair coverage and equitable access to all political units participating in the elections. To gauge compliance with the PEC requirements, a *Standard Pack* of data was collected for each station monitored according to a set monitoring methodology. The introduction of the Standard Pack dictated the reorganisation of media monitoring for seven day coverage. Since broadcast media programming is generally made on a weekly basis, a whole week of data had to be collected to ensure that any perceived bias in coverage over a five day period was not negated by programming during the weekend.

Organisation of Monitoring for Standard Pack Data Collection

It was decided to monitor seven stations to collect statistically significant data on which the MEC could base its decisions regarding equitable access.

The seven "core" stations in question were:

- HRT (Zagreb)
- RTS (Belgrade)
- CHANNEL 5 (Pale)
- SRT (Banja Luka)
- TV BiH (Sarajevo)
- Radio St. John (Pale)

The above stations were monitored in Sarajevo during a period defined as prime time from 17.00 to 24.00. The stations were monitored each day for three weeks before the start of the election blackout period, which came into affect one day before voting began on September 12th. The only exception to this was Radio HB which, due to lack of resources in the Mostar Regional Center, was monitored during the main news broadcast *only*.

Standard Pack

During this prime-time period, the core stations were monitored for specific data. The Standard Pack consisted of five points:

- 1) Political Unit Time Share in News Periods.
- 2) Political Unit Time Share in Non-News Periods.
- 3) Total Number of Political Commercials in Non-News Periods.
- 4) Total number of mentions of political personalities *only*.
- 5) Total number of negative mentions of political parties and personalities.

Methodology for Collection of Standard Pack Data

It seems that few skills or little training are required to gather the data required, but actually knowing what to monitor and when; what constitutes political campaigning; and understanding such concepts as mentions of parties or candidates are extremely difficult to define. For this reason, a reasonably detailed methodology is outlined below to give the reader a better idea of how monitoring was implemented.

The key methodological points guiding data collection for the Standard Pack are listed below.

1. Political Unit Time Share in News Periods

- Timing starts with introduction by announcer and finishes with the end of the feature
- For mixed stories, all parties mentioned receive the whole time of the story (this was dictated by the difficulty of dividing reports covering groups of parties)
- Reports or clips of officials of parties count as time for parties
- Elected politicians carrying out their official duties inside BiH not counted as campaign-related
- Sister parties in other countries not counted as campaign-related if BiH not mentioned
- Reports on non-attendance of politicians or parties not counted as time given to political units

2. Political Unit Time Share in Non-News Periods

- Debates - time is divided between parties (both announcer/mediator plus politician's speaking time)
- Roundtables - as above
- Special political report programs

- Editorial comment on parties counted as time for parties
- Time for political commercials, party political broadcasts, interviews with politicians added to political unit time share

3. Total Number of Political Commercials in Non-News Periods

- Time not counted, number only
- Special category since political units could produce TV spots of up to one minute duration (30 seconds for radio) and broadcasters were obliged to run them free of charge and equally for all parties.

4. Total number of mentions of political personalities *ONLY*

- Not timed
- Total mentions include negative mentions
- A mention is defined as when a candidate's name or official position are uttered in any sentence regarding political campaign for BiH elections
- Not issue-related

5. Total number of negative mentions of political parties *AND* personalities

- Only who has been mentioned negatively, not who did the mentioning
- Quote, paraphrase or report included in mentions

In general, the Standard Pack covered only political campaigning involving the BiH elections. The countries bordering BiH, namely Croatia and FRY, transmit signals that cover much of Bosnia's territory; the two countries often broadcast political news that relates to BiH. Moreover, many BiH political parties are offshoots of political parties in Croatia and the FRY, including: the Croat Democratic Union of BiH; the Socialist Party of Republika Srpska; and the Serb Radical Party of Republika Srpska.

Monitoring of the seven core stations required:

- a) Tapes be made of the core stations for this period;
- b) Monitors watch in detail any program with political content, including: news programs; election specials; round tables; debates; and reports on campaigning;
- c) For political programs, the monitors had to determine if the content had to do with campaigning. Topics not included were reports on elected office holders performing official duties; candidates on trips outside of BiH; and coverage of sister parties;
- d) When a report dealt with a political campaign or personality, monitors filled out a "Tick Sheet," which contained boxes where all the relevant information gathered for the Standard Pack could be compiled. The monitors would: 1) time any report on main news or in a non-news political program; 2) make "ticks" for the number of mentions (negative, positive or neutral) made of a candidate or party and; 3) note the type of program covering a political unit, including political spot and debates.

Date from tick sheets was input into Excel spreadsheets and depicted in graph form. These daily graphs were the basis for weekly graphs.

Why This Pack Rather Than Another?

The *PEC Rules and Regulations* set the requirements for the Standard Pack. During the campaign period, the MEC was focused on guaranteeing (1) fair and (2) equitable access and monitoring for inflammatory and/or hate language. The Standard Pack was designed to ensure that these requirements were met.

The Standard Pack's first three points: Political Unit Time-Share in News Periods; Political Unit Time Share in Non-News Periods; Total Number of Political Commercials in Non-News Periods; address equitable access. Only the amount of time given to political units and their representatives was considered.

Regarding equitable access, the 4th and the 5th points of the Standard Pack (Total Number of Mentions of Political Personalities in News Periods and Total Number of Negative Mentions of Political Personalities and Parties in News Periods) were included to illustrate which candidates were of topical concern. The total number of negative mentions, when combined with a transcript of the mention and synopsis of its context gave an idea of how the candidates were treated.

Points four and five do not have statistical value, but give an overview of the prominence given to a politician or a party or the severity of attacks. Practically speaking, the mentions category provided a reference to the specific points on the tapes in the case of a complaint. When a politician or party complained unfair or inequitable access or negative coverage it could immediately be assessed whether or not the complaint was well-founded or not. Also, the daily graphs showed on which day and in which time period mentions were made. This eliminated the need for the monitors to sift through every tape of the station in question.

The last point of the Standard Pack offered a quantitative overview of who was treated negatively by a TV or radio station. This data was complemented by a transcript of the negative mentions; this provided a check on the nature and level of the inflammatory language used.

The advantages of this standard analysis are clear, but the model can be criticised: it does not deal with qualitative, content or discourse analysis in any depth. Such analyses for even 5 stations over a 7-hour prime-time period would have been impossible considering the human resources available. However, the Standard Pack fulfilled its role, and detected violations of *PEC Rules and Regulations*. Especially important cases (see below) could be analysed in this manner.

Organisation of Monitoring

The requirements and methodology described above required that the monitoring operation had to be organised along certain operational lines. This report does not aim to give details of organisational aspects of the operation, it will be helpful to give some idea of how monitoring was run in terms of human resources and equipment.

Each monitor was able to monitor up to two or three stations per night. Some tick sheet work could be done on one station when relevant programs were broadcast. More detailed work such as decisions regarding news reports' relevance to the BiH campaign, whether a mention should be classified as negative or not, and how many mentions were made required the tapes be reviewed many times. Completed tick sheets were handed over to the statistics team, which collated the data and depicted it in graphs.

Weekly Analysis of Standard Pack Data

The numerical data for the Standard Pack's five points were collected each day. At the end of seven days the data was compiled for a statistically significant analysis of equitable access on the stations and an overview of mentions. Broadcasting programming is generally run on the basis of a weekly schedule; a seven day period covers all possible programming, and will exclude prominence given to parties or personalities as a result of their newsworthiness on a particular day.

In established democracies, the difference between the coverage given to a usually small number of parties is the subject of in-depth statistical analysis regarding very small percentage differences in time provided. Such small differences require complicated statistical analysis dealing with questions of significant sample sizes, time compensation for newsworthiness etc. In BiH, such considerations were of limited importance, given the significant difference in political party coverage by the media.

The weekly graphs illustrate that all the stations for which graphs were produced were clearly biased towards one party or group of parties. The exception being TVBiH, which significantly altered its programming schedule to provide equitable access during the campaign period.

The first three points of the Standard Pack illustrated in Media Monitoring's graphs (shown as absolute and percentage values) may seem to give cut-and-dried evidence of bias. Closer investigation reveals that some of the problems experienced by the monitoring team in assigning figures to political units. The main problem during the 1998 elections was that numerous elections were contested at various levels, including: including Presidential; Parliamentary for BiH Federation; Presidential RS; Cantonal; and Municipal levels.

Several parties formed coalitions that varied in composition according to the level of election. This left the monitoring team in the position of deciding whether or not time for a party leader should be considered as time for that party or for a coalition of which the party was a member at one or two levels.

Ultimately, it was determined that the bias was so great that despite the solution of leaving all personalities, units and coalition members separate on absolute value graphs and summing them for percentage values, the station's preferred party was still receiving a time share that was usually a positive integer multiple of that given to other parties.

Case Studies

Complaints Regarding Equitable Access: Zubak – Jelavic

The Standard Pack's primary role was detection of equitable access violations and inflammatory or hate language. In case of a violation, the Standard Pack (primarily the last