### APPENDIX

### MONITORING METHODOLOGY

#### Introduction

Key concepts to this methodology are **subjects** of the election process and **rubrics**, according to which the content of electronic media outlets is monitored. Another important concept is an object of monitoring, which is just a media outlet that a team of monitors choose to make quantitative and qualitative analysis of its content based on **professional standards** and principles of **journalist ethics.**

While conducting monitoring it is important to be aware of different stages of the election campaign, which, as it is the case of Belarus, are determined by the Central Election and Referendums Commission.

**Quantitative and qualitative approaches**

Combining quantitative and qualitative approaches the monitoring methodology aims to produce the most objective evaluation possible of how the election is being covered in the media. Three basic parameters are taken into account to evaluate the character of media election coverage:

* Time (in broadcast media) and space (in print media) given to different subjects, theirrepresentativesor actors in the election process;
* The manner in which different subjects, their representatives or actors are presented in different media outlets;
* Instances of unprofessional or unbalanced election coverage, including distorted information, libel and defamation concerning candidates, their programmes, conduct, etc.

The first or quantitative parameterpresupposes measuring **time and space** given by the media to different subjects. The second (qualitative) monitoring parameter is the **manner in which the subjects are presented** in the media. It presupposes assessment of news items in the broadcast media and contributions to the print media in terms of favouring particular subjects in each news item or article. And the third parameter, which is also a qualitative one, is based on revealing to what degree news items and articles correspond to **professional standards in journalism** (i.e. separating facts from commentaries, many-sided presentation, impartiality, etc.). It is also based on revealing how news items and articles correlate with **ethics in journalism** (i.e. equal opportunities for opponents, the opponent’s right to respond in the same media outlet that has distorted information or presented the subject in a negative light, etc.). It goes without saying that quantitative approach has its peculiarity while monitoring electronic and printed media. The qualitative approach to both cases is however the same.

**Monitoring Broadcast Media**

TV programmes are monitored with a focus on picture and sound information. Radio programmes monitoring is focused on sound information solely. Monitoring centres primarily on the election as its subject matter, then the subjects participating in the election process and the parameters monitored. All other news items that do not refer to either the election or its subjects are not to be covered by the monitors.

The first step in monitoring is to **select** TV or radio news items that cover or refer to the election.

**Measuring Time**

The second step is to measure the time given to each of the subjects monitored. **The time is measured in seconds.** All the selected news items are to be monitored; each of them is monitored separately.

The time given to **each subject/actor** is measured, when:

* The subject (actor) is only in the shot;
* The subject is in the shot, speaking directly into the camera or microphone;
* The subject is spoken about by a media representative, which on the radio means that the subject is quoted by a journalist and on TV that the subject appeared in the shot, with a commentary provided by a journalist;
* A third actor, e.g. another political figure, a journalist or a voter speaks about the subject.

An instance when a subject is not given any measurable time but is mentioned is called a reference. Each reference is recorded in the form too and one reference is allocated 1 second.

**Monitoring Printed Media**

Printed media monitoring is focused on textual information and pictures (i.e. photos, cartoons, logos, images of party banners, etc.) in each issue of the paper taken separately. Just like in monitoring TV and radio programmes, print media monitoring centres on the election as its subject matter, the subjects participating in the election and the parameters monitored. All other contributions that do not refer to either the election or its subjects are not to be covered by the monitors.

The first step in monitoring media outlets is to **select** articles that cover or refer to the election.

**Measuring Space**

# The second step is to measure the space allotted to each subject in the selected contributions. The space is measured in square centimetres. All the selected contributions are to be monitored, each of them taken separately. One checklist is used to assess one paper only. The articles are scanned page by page in the paper, with special attention on the front page, as it is the one that the largest number of people read. An article on the front page is often continued on some other pages. Then the article is analysed as a whole and the continuation pages are recorded. Its whole space and that of each extract on each page are to be measured.

In measuring the spaceit is important to determine which subject in the story is the main one or if the story presents one main and some auxiliary subjects. If the article brings information on one main subject, this subject is allotted the whole of the article space. If there are any other subjects mentioned, these references are treated as remarks and allotted 1 square centimetre of space**.** Each of them is assessed in terms of the manner of presentation parameter.

If the article has two subjects (i.e. it gives a more or less professional comparison of two candidates’ programmes) and the comparison can eventually favour one of them, the article space is equally divided between the two actors. Each of them gets their evaluation mark in terms of the manner of presentation.

If a neutral factual article has several actors, none of them being a dominant subject, all the actors get a reference with a neutral grade.

**Assessing the Manner in Which the Subjects Are Presented**

The manner of presentation is assessed in the same way both for the broadcast and the print media. Assessment criteria are rooted in professional standards and principles of journalist ethics such as impartiality, balanced approach, fairness, lack of prejudice and others. Deviations from these principles are subject to either positive or negative evaluation of a subject’s portrayal.

The manner in which the subjects are presented is evaluated on the scale of **1** **to 5.**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **1=(+)**  **Highy positive** | **2=(+)**  **Positive** | **3=(0)**  **Neutral** | **4=(--)**  **Negative** | **5=(--)**  **Highy negative** |

The grade 2 (positive) means that the information on a subject had a character of praise. The grade 1 (highly positive) conveys an extreme praise or admiration connected with some success or rather attribution of success. Expressed in a very emotional way or through an extolled comparison with a well-known historic figure or context such kind of presentation should be qualified as highly positive.

The grade 4 (negative) means that a subject is viewed in a disfavoring way. And the grade 5 conveys an extremely disfavoring or hostile portrayal of a subject. Quite often the effect is strengthened by systematic positive presentation of one and the same actors and by negative presentation of others.

On TV the manner of presentation is determined by the use of picture and sound effects, the anchorman’s intonation and the style of the text itself.

In the press the manner of presentation is determined by explicit or implicit judgements about the actor, references to positive or negative contexts, historic figures, the style, etc.

**Media Effects**

Media effects should be viewed the cases of serious deviations from the professional standards in covering any publicly important issue, topic or figure. As a result of these deviations the overwhelming majority of highly positive and highly negative presentations of political subjects during the election campaign fall into the category of media effects. The quantity of such cases conveys to what extent media are involved or not involved into the manipulation of public opinion in favour of the Government, this or that political block, party or candidate. At the same time it shows to what degree different media are independent and to what degree the freedom of expression is a respected value in a society.

**Monitoring Checklists (Forms)**

The monitoring results are put into the forms. Paper forms are compulsory.There are three different forms for monitoring **the broadcast media.**

**Form 1** is meant to capture the number of news items on the programme in general, the overall time of the programme, the numeric order of relevant news items, a brief description of the relevant news items (i.e. subject-matter, message, time span).

**Form 2** captures the time given and the manner in which the subjects monitored are presented in news items selected by the monitor as relevant or on a programme, for example, featuring the opposition.

**Form 3** is designed to record instances of distorted information, blocking election-relevant subjects and issues, cases of defamation, libel, etc.

There is **only one form** for monitoring **the print media**, in which the page, the headline, etc. are recorded.

While filling in the forms, the monitors use abbreviations referring to the objects to be monitored and subjects participating in the election. The names of people representing the given subjects are recorded in full. Every monitor enters either his or her name and personal number or the personal number only in the form for monitoring the print media.

**The forms filled in are electronically processed.**