MONITORING: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The key concepts of this methodology are **actors**[1] of the election process and **sections**, according to which the content of broadcast media is monitored. Another important concept is a subject of monitoring, which is just a media outlet that the team of monitors choose to make quantitative and qualitative analysis of its content based on **professional standards** and the principles of **ethics in journalism.**

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

Quantitative and qualitative approaches

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

- Air time (in broadcast media) and space (in printed media) given to different actors of the election process;
- The manner in which different actors are presented in different media outlets;
- Media effects, i.e. instances of unprofessional or unbalanced election coverage, including distorted information, libel and defamation of candidates, their programmes, conduct, etc.

The first or quantitative parameter means measuring **air time and space** given by the media to different actors. The second (qualitative) monitoring parameter is the **manner in which the actors are presented** in the media. It means assessing news items in the electronic media and contributions to the printed media in terms of favouring particular actors in each news item or article. And the third parameter, which is also a qualitative one, reveals 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 also reveals 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 actor in a negative light, etc.). There are certainly some differences in the quantitative approaches to

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[1] See below.

electronic and printed media, while the qualitative approach in both cases is 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. The monitoring centres primarily on the election as its subject matter, then the actors of the election process and the monitored parameters. All other news items that do not refer to either the election or its actors are not covered by the monitoring.

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

Measuring Air Time

The second step is to measure the air time given to each of the actors. **The air 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 actor** is measured, when:
● The actor just appears on the screen;
● The actor appears on the screen, speaking directly into the camera or microphone;
● The actor is spoken about by a media representative, which means that a reporter quotes the actor on the radio, and the actor appears on the screen, with a commentary provided by a journalist on TV;
● 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, printed media monitoring centres on the election as its subject matter, the actors participating in the election and the monitored parameters. All other contributions that do not refer to either the election or its subjects are not covered by the monitoring.

The first step in monitoring printed 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 actor in the selected contributions. The space is measured in square centimetres. All the selected contributions are to be monitored separately. One checklist is used to assess one paper only. The articles are scanned page by page, with special attention to the front page, as it is the one that the largest number of people read. Front page stories are often continued elsewhere. 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 measured.

In measuring the space it is important to determine the main actor of the story or the main and secondary actors. If the article gives information about one main actor, they are allotted the whole of the article space. If there are any other actors 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.

If the article focuses on two actors, 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 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 Actors Are Presented

The manner of presentation is assessed in the same way both for the broadcast and printed media. The assessment criteria are based on the professional standards and principles of ethics in journalism, such as impartiality, balanced approach, fairness, unbiased coverage, etc. Departures from these principles result in the actor's positive or negative representation and are assessed accordingly.

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

1=(+) Highy positi ve	2=(+) Positi ve	3=(0) Neutr al	4=(--) Negat ive	5=(--) Highy negati ve

Grade 2 (positive) means that the actor is praised in a particular information piece. Grade 1 (highly positive) corresponds to the highest degree of praise or admiration for the actor's success or rather attribution of success. Expressed in a very emotional way or through an exalted comparison with a well-known historical figure or context, such kind of presentation qualifies as highly positive.

Grade 4 (negative) means that the actor is shown in an unfavourable light. Grade 5 indicates an extremely unfavourable or hostile presentation. The effect is quite often reinforced by a repeated positive portrayal of some actors and negative presentation of the others.

The manner of presentation on TV is determined by the use of picture and sound effects, the presenter's intonation and the style of the text itself.

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

Media Effects

Media effects are cases of serious departures from the professional standards in the coverage of any issue of public importance or public figure. As a result, an overwhelming majority of highly positive and highly negative presentations of political actors during the election campaign fall into the category of media effects. The number of such cases shows to what extent the media are involved in manipulating public opinion in favour of the government, a certain political bloc, party or candidate. At the same time it shows how independent different media are and to what degree the society respects freedom of expression as a fundamental value.

Monitoring Checklists (Forms)

The findings of the monitoring are recorded in special forms. There are three different forms for monitoring **the broadcast media.**
Form 1 records the number of news items on the programme in general, its total air time, the chronological order of relevant news items and their brief descriptions (i.e. the subject-matter, message, and time span).
Form 2 records the time given and the manner in which the monitored actors are presented in news items selected by the monitor as relevant or on a programme, for example, featuring the opposition.
Form 3 records instances of distorted information, blocking election-relevant subjects and issues, cases of defamation, libel, etc.
There is **only one form** for monitoring **the printed media**, in which the page, the headline, etc. are given.

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

Completed forms are then electronically processed.

Monitored Subjects:

1. АГП – United Civic Party (UCP)

2. АК – Акруговыя камісіі – Election District Constituency Commissions(EDCC)

3. АБК – Абласныя камісіі – Regional Commissions (RC)

4. АП – Апазіцыя – Opposition(OP)

5. БАП – Беларуская аграрная партыя – Belarusian Agrarian Party(BAP)

6. . БАВ -- .Беларускае грамадскае аб'яднанне ветэранаў

7. БПП – Беларуская патрыятычная партыя – Belarusian Patriotic Party (BPP)

8. ББЗ – Беларускі бізнэс – Belarusian Business (BB)

9. БХК -- Беларускі Хельсінаўскі Камітэт (BHC)

10. БН – Беларускія назіральнікі – Belarusian Observers (BO)

11. БНФ – BPF Party (BPF)

12. БП – Беларускі парламент – Belarusian Parliament (BP)

13. БПЗ – Беларуская Партыя "Зялёныя"– Green Party

14. БПЛ "СС" – Беларуская партыя "Справядлівы свет" – Belarusian Left Party

15. БР – Белая Русь – Belaya Rus NGO (BR)

16. БРСМ – Беларускі рэспубліканскі сюз моладзі – Belarusian National Youth Union (BNYU)

17. БСДП (Грамада)– Belarusian Social Democratic Party (Community)

18. БСЖан – Беларускі Саюз жанчын -- Belarusian Women's Union (BWU)

19. БУ – Беларускі ўрад – Belarusian Government (BG)

20. БХД – Беларуская Хрысціянская Дэмакратыя – Belarusian Christian Democracy (BCD)

21. ВК – выбарчыя камісіі—Election Commissions (EC)

22. ВУ – выбарчыя ўчасткі – Election Centre (ECN)

23. ГП – Гавары праўду – Tell the Truth Movement

24. ДА – давераная асоба -- authorised representative (AR)

25. ЗН – Заходнія назіральнікі – Western Observers

26. ІГ – ініцыятыўная група– campaign team (CT)

27. КПБ – Communist Party of Belarus (CPB)

28. КХП-БНФ – Conservative Christian Party (BPF – CCP)

29. ЛДП – Liberal Democratic Party (LDP)

30. МУ – Мясцовыя ўлады – Local Authorities

31. НДА – Недзяржаўныя арганізацыі – NGOs

32. НК – Незалежны кандыдат – Independent Candidate

33. НПК – Неперсаніфікаваны Кандыдат – No-personified Candidate

34. НСНД – Назіральнікі з краін СНД – CIS Observers (CO)

35. ПА – Прэзіденская адміністрацыя -- Presidential Administration (PA)

36. ПБСДГ (Партыя "Беларускаясацыял-дэмакратычная Грамада")– Belarusian Social Democratic Party – кіраўнік С.С. Шушкевіч

37. ПаК – партыйны кандыдат – Party Candidate (PRC)

38. ПК – патэнцыйны кандыдат—Potential Candidate (PTC)

39. ПП – Палітычныя партыі – Political Parties (PP)

40. ПР – Прэзідэнт – President (P)

41. ПРА –- Праўрадавыя арганізацыі – Pro-Governmental Organizations (PGO)

42. ПРА-К – праўладны кандыдат – Pro-Government Candidate;

43. Прозвішча-К – (Прозвішча) кандыдат – Family Name-Candidate

44. ПСП – Партыя свабоды і прагрэса – Party of Freedom and Progress

45. РП – Рэспубліканская партыя – Republican Party (RP)

46. РППС – Рэспубліканская партыя працы і справядлівасьці – Republican Party of Labor and Justice(NPFJ)

47. РС – Рух за "Свабоду" – For Freedom Movement (MF)

48. ССП – Сацыяльна-спартыўная партыя -- Social Sporting Party (SSP)

49.   УК – участковыя камісіі -- polling station commissions (PSC)

50.   УЛ – Улада – Government (G)

51.   УН – усходнія назіральнікі (Шанхайская арганізацыя супрацоўніцтва) – Oriental Observers (the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation) (OO SCO)

52.   ФПБ – Федэрацыя прафсаюзаў Беларусі-- Belarus' Federation of Trade Unions (BFTU)

53.   ЦВК – Цэнтральная выбарчая камісія РБ – Central Election Commission (CEC)

54.   ШК – штаб кандыдата -- candidate's campaign team (CCT)

55.   ЭЛ – Электарат – Electorate (E)