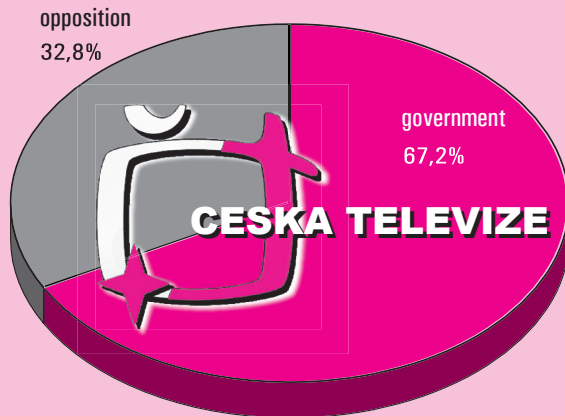


Czech Republic leads the way

Ongoing scrutiny of Czech public television

Government television? Structure of political coverage 09/2003



Share of statements about government and opposition

Source: MEDIA TENOR
09/01—09/30/2003

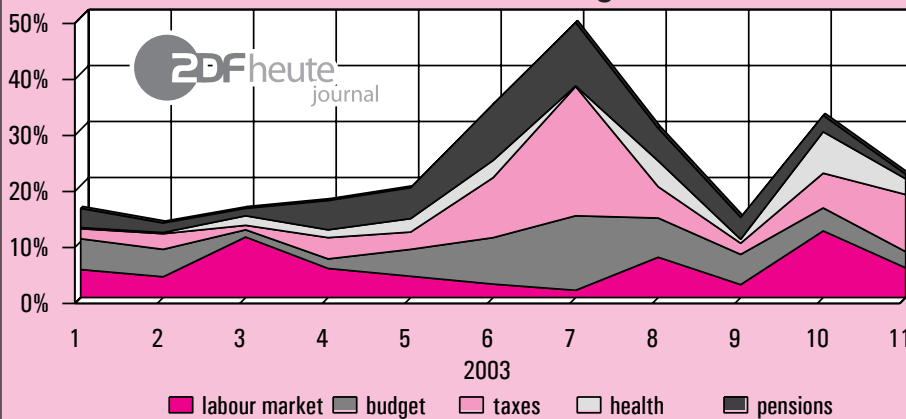
Basis: 100%: all statements about government and opposition;
in Ct UDALOSTI (news magazine of public television)

Public television stations in Germany want to confront the increasing criticism of their programming and spending sprees with a new commitment. They intend to deliver what, for the past 40 years, the German legislature and the Constitutional Court never managed to guarantee: the basic supply of information that public television must provide.

The soon-to-be EU member Czech Republic already has some experience in this question: This summer, the Prague parliament has required the public television station CT to undergo regular external evaluation. But CT goes far beyond that: Day by day, all evening news, interview and magazine programs are analyzed by the Czech MEDIA TENOR. Since the year 2000, the media researchers from Ostrava have been advising the television journalists, doing benchmark studies and helping with journalistic quality control. That year the members of parliament had asked MEDIA TENOR to develop criteria for an independent campaign coverage. Following this success, the Prague parliament passed a 'codex' on July 2nd 2003, which requires public television to be regularly scrutinized (at least four times a year) by an independent institute, looking at balance in reporting on political parties, program structure as well as linguistic and journalistic quality. This includes the structure of topics and protagonists, diversity and balance of political, business and regional reporting. The analysis must be submitted to parliament and serves as a basis for debates.

Erratic choice of topics at the ZDF

A case for evaluation: 2003 reform agenda for the news



Share of all statements about political protagonists

Source: MEDIA TENOR
01/01 — 11/26/2003

Basis: 100%: all statements about political protagonists;
23,919 statements overall

The codex of the Czech parliament for public television

"The Czech Television (CT) is to submit an analysis of its programming's balance on a regular basis, and at least once in three months, including a comparison of air-time that is given to political parties and movements. CT is to have this evaluation conducted by an independent, recognized institution." (§ 6, section 4)

"The Czech Television shall cooperate closely with linguistic experts and is required to consult these experts in cases of doubt, where possible before broadcasting. The verbal accuracy of its programs must be evaluated by an independent, recognized institution on a regular basis, and at least once every six months. This evaluation must be published." (§ 9, section 4)

Concrete guidelines instead of big words

The Czech parliament derives its content requirements from the function it has assigned to CT by a parliamentary act: provide balanced information, education, entertainment and the promotion of Czech film production. Zdenek Samal, the CT news director, comments: "Every team that adheres to clear rules will produce better results." The daily 'quality report' for CT's management contains a detailed review of all news and political formats. The criteria that MEDIA TENOR helped develop and that its researchers analyze on a daily basis include the relevance of selected news stories as well as that of the protagonists quoted and mentioned, transparency of quoted news sources, comprehensibility, verbal accuracy and veracity of portrayal.

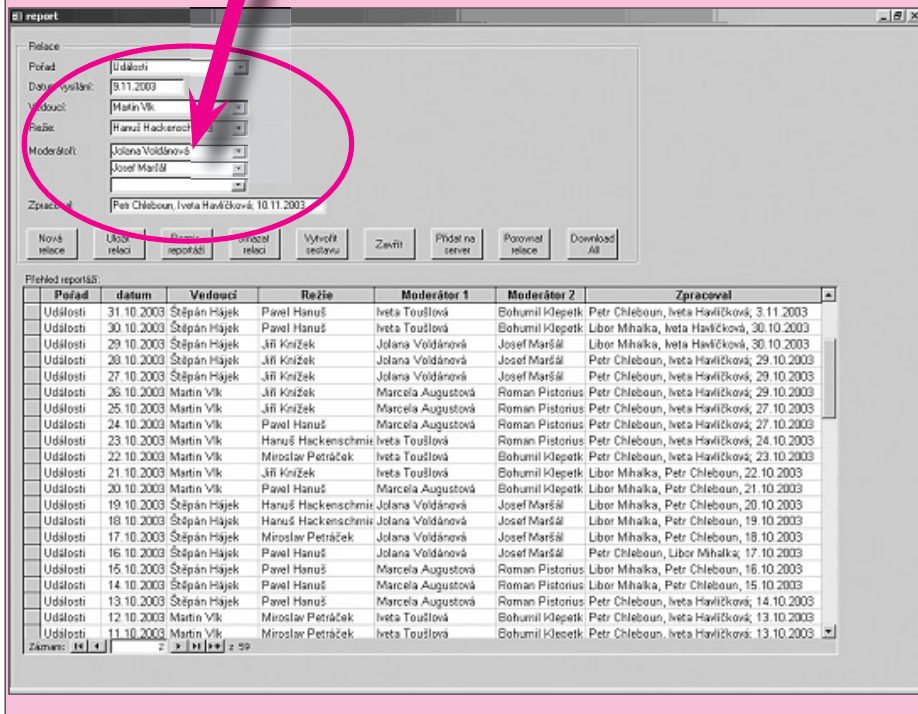
From the graph to the moving image

Both verbal and quantitative statistical analyses are made available to the management the morning after the staff program critique. To make this instrument of editorial staff evaluations more transparent, however, a detailed verbal description alone is often insufficient. MEDIA TENOR has therefore developed a program that, with a simple click on a bar in the graph, allows for the automatic playing of a video clip of the news piece that is being discussed. Thus the story can be immediately reviewed and measured against the appraisal.

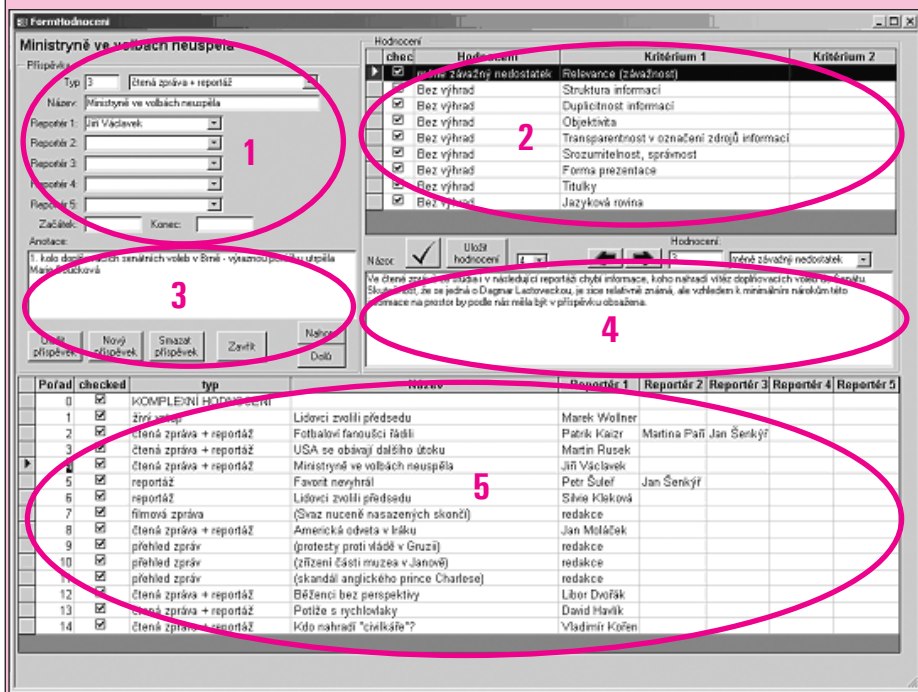
Future considerations at Czech Television even include turning the MEDIA TENOR evaluations into a ground for bonus payments to editors. A system of benchmarking and institutionalized program critique would also be a strong asset in Germany, as has been demonstrated by MEDIA TENOR analyses that pointed to a lack of topical diversity in public news and magazine formats. Regular check-ups could point out existing high-quality journalistic work and contribute to quality improvements that are sought by many editors today. LM/Sto.

MEDIA TENOR program evaluation, part 1
Computer interface of the Czech TV quality control

- magazine
- date
- editor
- presenter
- MEDIA TENOR researcher



MEDIA TENOR program evaluation, part 2
Computer interface of the Czech TV quality control



- 1 identification of story (format, title, author, length)
- 2 table of criteria
- 3 remarks
- 4 reasons for ratings
- 5 table of stories

Basis

Media: Ct UDALOSTI, ZDF HEUTE JOURNAL

Time: 09/01– 09/30/2003

01/01 – 11/26/2003

Analysis: all statements about the government and opposition on Ct UDALOSTI (public television in Czech republic);

ZDF HEUTE JOURNAL: analysis of 23,919 statements about political protagonists