

Poland was not only the pope

Media Tenor Country Award raises questions about journalistic standards

National pride and religion are important aspects of Polish identity – and John Paul II combined both facets in a more than only symbolic way: Poland’s desire for international recognition as well as a deep spirituality. Even in his death the 264th pope did not disappoint his compatriots: The picture of Poland conveyed to the world between July 2004 and June 2005 in international TV news was marked by attention and respect for its most famous ambassador. Nevertheless Poland also wins this award by its own efforts and therefore deservedly: Because without the valiant Polish reformers of the last decades Poland’s internationally declared belief in the pope and the church, today taken as a matter of course, which has had a positive impact on Poland’s media image, is as hard to imagine as the radical political changes in the Eastern bloc altogether.

Focus on individual personalities

Also for N° 3 in the overall ranking, Great Britain, it is true that especially the impact of an individual personality is responsible for the good result in the overall ranking: Foreign media coverage recapitulates results rather than decision-making

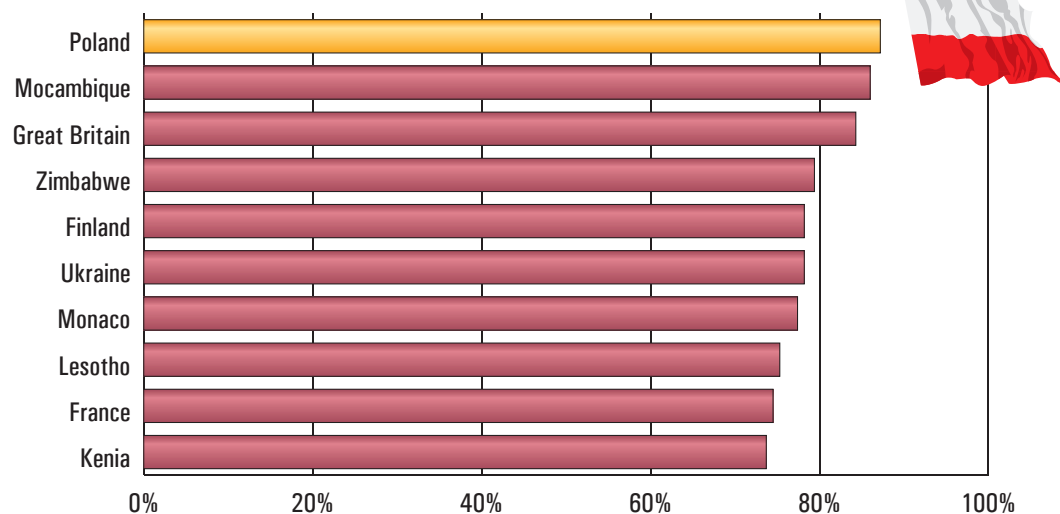
processes, thus in the coverage of British prime minister Tony Blair the Labour Party’s electoral victory in 2005 and a successful economic policy weigh heavier than the last months’ animosities in domestic policy issues, especially in connection with the Iraq war.

But both examples – Poland as well as the United Kingdom – also show clearly that at least concerning individuals, international TV news do not contribute enough to the diversity of coverage. The selection of topics in the articles on the prize winners does justify awarding a media prize for “diversity of coverage” to countries whose image is determined by individuals in the first place. Yet hardly any other prize category compels one to examine the quality of the analysed reporting to that degree.

An examination of journalistic standards

The 2nd and 4th place in the ranking are much more drastic examples of this problem. At present, in autumn 2005, the media coverage of Mocambique (2nd rank) and Zimbabwe (4th rank) is dominated by reports on famines and disaster scenarios. The drought itself as the trigger of the disaster may be beyond human influence, however, the serious consequences for the population are not. In Zimbabwe the lunatic expropriation policy of President Robert Mugabwe has led the country to the verge of a total economic collapse: the former granary of

Media Tenor Country Communicator 2005: Final Results

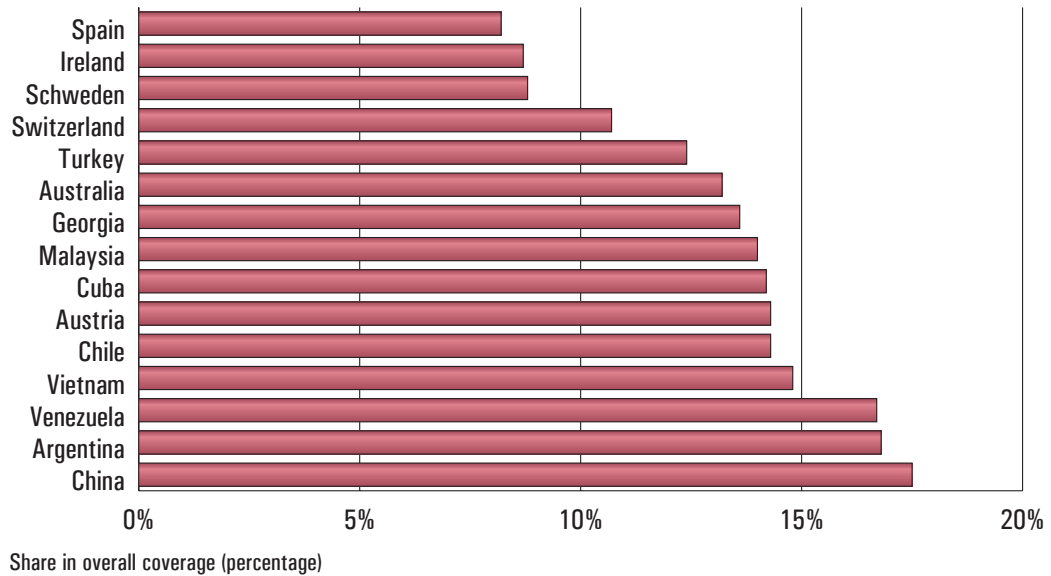


100 percent = maximum number of score points (223)

Source: Media Tenor
07/01/2004 – 06/30/2005

Basis: 37,226 reports
in 17 international TV news

Share of calamity issues in overall coverage (less is better)



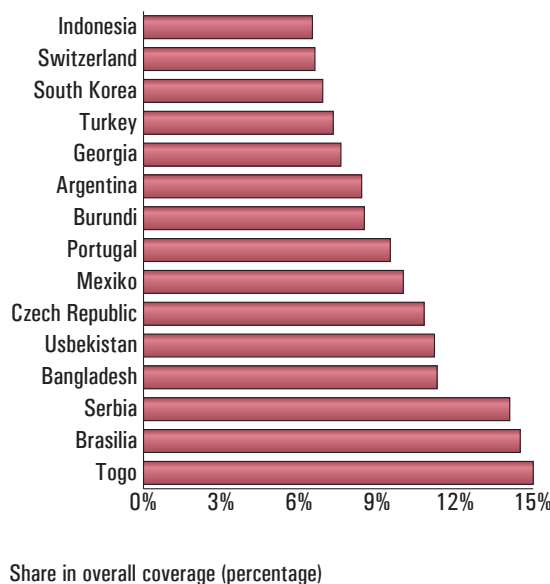
Source: Media Tenor
07/01/2004 – 06/30/2005

Basis: 37,226 reports
in 17 international TV news

Africa is degenerating into a poorhouse, whilst its head of government continues to report to the UN of his successful “reform program”. The omitted coverage of the regime in Zimbabwe shows the indifference of German, British and US-American TV newsrooms as well as an interest-led lack of criticism particularly in the analysed South Afri-

can media. Zimbabwe’s good result in the ranking therefore gives less reason to congratulate, much more than that it rather provokes questions of the editors’ journalistic standards - an observation little solemn but necessary.

Share of crime issues in overall coverage (less is better)



Source: Media Tenor
07/01/2004 – 06/30/2005

Basis: 37,226 reports
in 17 international TV news

Mocambique on the 2nd rank deserves its comparatively positive media image more legitimately: as junior partner of economically booming South Africa it belongs to the “prospering” countries in Africa, as World Bank president Wolfowitz recently stated. However, the reason why the positive assessment by South African journalists weighs so heavy is that the analysed TV news in other countries show a remarkable lack of interest. In this respect, Mocambique taking the 2nd place in the **Media Tenor** ranking is a success of esteem, and at the same time it calls for international TV newsrooms to improve the coverage of Black Africa south of the Sahara in quantity as well as diversity and to finally pay it the attention its potential deserves. sm

Basis:

Media: U.S.: ABC, NB, CBS Evening News
South Africa: SABC News Afrikaans, English, Sotho, Zulu/Xhosa, E-TV SA
Germany: ARD Tagesschau and Tagesthemen, ProSieben News, ZDF heute and heute journal, SAT.1 18.30, Deutsche Welle TV Journal German and English, RTL Aktuell
Time: 07/01/2004 – 06/30/2005
Analysis: 37,226 reports about the selected countries