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WG III: Technical & Practical Aspects of Monitoring

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This paper is aimed at introducing the issues at stake and providing basic guidelines for discussion for Working group III.

The issue of programme monitoring has been discussed on several occasions at EPRA meetings: in 1997 two working groups addressed different monitoring practices; in 2000 the focus shifted to more technical aspects of monitoring. The last time EPRA dealt with the topic was in Budapest in 2005 where a working group was dedicated to the topic of *Programme Monitoring: Methods and Case Studies*¹ in the general context of proliferation of channels and the development of new types of content.

On this occasion, the group heard four presentations from EPRA members: from the National Audiovisual Council of Romania, the French CSA, the Spanish (Catalan) CAC and the Swiss Independent Complaints Commission (AIEP/UBI). The presentations highlighted the great diversity between monitoring systems in Europe. This comes as a consequence of the differing remits of regulators (e.g. either for public or private broadcasters or both), but also of the size of the authorities and of the broadcasting landscapes they regulate, not to forget of course the inherent characteristics of the national media landscapes which may result in a higher emphasis placed on the monitoring of certain types of broadcasters (e.g. community services) or in a focus on specific monitoring activities (e.g. political pluralism or protection of minors).

This time however, the focus of the working group will be somewhat different as it was suggested to specifically address *technical and practical aspects of monitoring* rather than debating on the type of content or content provider which should be subject to monitoring. More precisely, the main objective of the group is to discuss the various ways to make monitoring *more efficient and less labour intensive*.

Indeed, a quick look at the comparative table which had been produced on the occasion of the Budapest meeting (annexed to this paper) is highly revealing. Even though most of the data may have become obsolete by now (status October 2005), it illustrates how labour intensive monitoring can be - at least in some countries. This was the case for some large regulatory authorities like the French CSA (50 full-time staff), the Romanian National Audiovisual Council (44 full-time staff) or The Turkish Supreme Council (70 full-time-staff). However, some smaller regulatory bodies also

¹ See EPRA background paper EPRA/2005/11 by Deirdre Kevin,
[http://www.epra.org/content/english/members/working_papers/Budapest/WG2_programme_monitoring_update\(2\).doc](http://www.epra.org/content/english/members/working_papers/Budapest/WG2_programme_monitoring_update(2).doc)

seemed (at least at the time) to employ a large number of staff compared to their overall altogether modest size, such as the Broadcasting Authority in Malta (12 full-time staff) or the Slovenian APEK (8 full-time).

In many instances however, as highlighted in Budapest, the monitoring (and review of complaints) of programming is carried out by the staff as part of their overall duties in the authority i.e. there are no (or few) full time staff. In some instances the regulatory authority does not monitor programming in-house (although they deal with complaints in-house), where it is carried out by a separate agency. Many also employ temporary or occasional staff, or outsource monitoring (due to limited resources) in order to carry out particular research, or during elections, or to cover regional and cable operators.

New technical developments such as Digital Recording Systems are particularly relevant in this context as they may help improve the tedious work conditions of the coders, reduce the number of staff involved in the monitoring process and contribute to better efficiency of the monitoring carried out.

In addition, new technological developments may provide some answers – though not likely to be the universal remedy - to the substantial increase in the number of television and radio broadcasts in the wake of digitalization.

New digital monitoring systems have now been introduced in several countries, such as in *Romania* in 2004 under a Phare Project, or in *Spain (Catalonia)* in 2001 (Tarsys system). In *Belgium Flanders*, the VRM has very recently concluded an agreement with a firm specialised in automatical monitoring of television and radio broadcasts. This will allow the VRM to extend in the future the number of selective audits and to raise the efficiency of the audits². The *Maltese Broadcasting Authority* appointed a technical consultant to draw up a tender document for the purchase of equipment to record local television stations in digital format last summer. The *Slovenian* electronic communications Authority is currently in the process of replacing its system of VHS video recording used for monitoring all nationwide television stations broadcasting in Slovenia with a digital version and is about to launch an international public tender for the monitoring system. The *Czech* RRTV is also automating its monitoring.

With a view of illustrating the above-mentioned issues, we will hear two presentations from EPRA members during this group.

First of all, the *Television and Radio Supreme Council* (RTÜK) will report about the SKAAS Project (Digital Recording Archive and Analysis Project) recently developed in Turkey. It is a system based on the use of technology in broadcast monitoring. According to a press release³ published earlier this year, it will enable the RTÜK to record and archive more than 210 TV and 860 radio broadcasts. More than forty desktops will be used to analyze these active broadcasts and some two hundred servers will record the incoming broadcasts. All computers will be linked

² See country report for Sofia of the Flemish VRM.

³ ec.europa.eu/idabc/en/document/7209/469

to terrestrial as well as satellite tuners. The Open Source database management system Postgresql will be used to store the broadcast data.

Secondly, Balázs Józ, Head of the Broadcast Monitoring and Analysis Department, will report on the extensive experience of the Hungarian ORTT in introducing a digital recording system, notably using voice recognition software.

The presentations will be followed by a debate with the participants moderated by Group Chair, Andris Mellakauls.

Questions which may be raised during the group may include the following:

- What are the experiences of EPRA members in the introduction of digital recording systems?
- Which software/hardware are used?
- Are digital recording systems specifically tailored to the needs of the national regulators?
- What are the pros and cons of introducing digital recording systems?
- What about the accuracy of results?
- Is there a gain on effectivity likely to counterbalance the high costs?
- Where are the limits of such systems?
- Does it significantly reduces the number of monitoring staff or rather change the type of work for the analysts?
- Are technical solutions the answer to all problems?
- What about the monitoring of new media services?
- With the explosion in the number of media service providers, is the battle for monitoring already a lost one?

Overview monitoring remits, and extent of EPRA members⁴ (2005)

Country	Supervision		Monitoring				Staff
	private	public	Handling complaints	All output	Samples	Complaint based	
Private only							
Austria	X		X			X	2 full time
Cyprus	X		X				8 (as part of work)
Germany ⁵	X		X				
LFM	X		X		X	X	3 full time (4 students)
BLM	X		X		X	X	50 (part time)
ULR	X		X		X	X	2 full time (2 students)
Ireland	X				X	X(1)	8 full time
Israel	X		X				1.5 (full time)
CCTSB							
Israel 2 nd Auth	X		X		X	X	5 (full time)
Spain Navarra	X		X				2 (full time)
Turkey	X		X		X	X	70 full time
Public only							
Estonia		X	X (1)				external
Private and public							
Albania	X	X	X				15-20 (full time)
Belgium CSA	X	X	X		X	X	3
Belgium CvdM	X	X	X		X	X	3 (as part of work)
Bosnia Herzegovina	X	X	X				3
Bulgaria	X	X	X				23 Full time
Croatia	X	X	X		X	X	External (by tender)
Czech Republic	X	X	X		X	X	5 full time
Denmark	X	X (1)	X			X	0
Finland	X	X	X		X	X	2 (as part of work)
France	X	X	X	X FTA	X	X	50 full time
Greece	X	X	X		X	X	18 full time
Hungary	X	X	X		X	X	16 full time (40 freelance)
Isle of Man	X	X	X		X	X	1.5 (as part of work)
Italy	X	X	X	X			5 (full time) + external
Latvia	X	X	X		X(1)	X	1 (full time)
Lithuania	X	X	X		X	X	5 full time
Luxembourg	X	X	X		X	X	
Macedonia	X	X	No	national			7 full time (+external)
Malta	X	X	X		X	X	12 full time
Moldova	X	X	X		X	X	7 full time
Netherlands	X	X	X		X	X	11 full time
Norway	X	X	X		X	X	5 (as part of work)
Poland	X	X	X		X	X	18 full time
Portugal	X	X			X		
Romania	X	X	X	X	X	X	44* full time
Serbia	X	X	X		X	X	15 full time
-Montenegro	X	X	X				4 full time
-Kosovo	X	X	X		X(1)	x	6 full time
Spain	X	X	X	news	X	X	22 full time
-Catalonia							
Slovak Republic	X	X	X		X	X	10 full time
Slovenia	X	X	X		X	X	8 full time
Sweden SBC	X	X	X		X	X	8 (as part of work)
Switzerland UBI/ AIEP	X	X	X			X	9 (as part of work)
Ukraine	X	X	X	X		X	5 full time
UK	X	X	X		X	X	(as part of work)

(1) on a limited basis only

* including regional

⁴ Compiled by EPRA Secretariat based on regulator profiles, member websites and question to members in October 2005.

⁵ examples from 3 of the Landesmedienanstalten