

# Monitoring Media Election Coverage, Chile

## I Fact Sheet

**Name of the Tool:** Monitoring Media Election Coverage

**Brief Description:** The aim of the project was to monitor different media sources (press, television, and radio) in order to determine the type of coverage provided for candidates, parties and political coalitions during the run-up to the congressional elections.

Quantitative and qualitative criteria were considered in order to analyse the different political agendas in the contest and the opportunities of the voting public to learn about the different proposals on offer.

**Responsible Organisation:** Corporación PARTICIPA

**Creation of the Tool:** PARTICIPA Corporation (using the methodology provided by the Instituto Federal de Elecciones de México).

**Problems Addressed by the Tool:** The inequitable media coverage of different candidates and their proposals during the election period; the lack of thorough or credible reporting by some media sources; the possibility of biased information being circulated by the media during election time which may work to the detriment or benefit of different candidates.

To this end, the monitoring promotes a media that provides increased access to transparent and timely information about candidates and their political campaigns with the objective of avoiding corrupt activities during times of elections.

**Areas of Work:** Access to information during election time; promotion of informational diversity; citizen control of political information in the media sources during the election period.

**When the Tool was Implemented:** The tool was implemented during October, November and December 2001 in Santiago, Chile. Parliamentary elections were held throughout the country on 16 December.

**Alliances:** Instituto Federal de Elecciones de México ([www.ife.org.mx](http://www.ife.org.mx)) provided the methodology for this tool to PARTICIPA.

The study received additional support from the Lawyers Association, the Reporters Association, and the Chilean Association of Advertising Agencies. The schools of journalism and political science at different universities based in Santiago also participated (Catholic University, University of Chile, Diego Portales University, University of the Pacific of Chile). An advisory council was

created for the project, including representatives from each of these institutions. The group made suggestions during some phases of the project and reviewed the results.

**Financing:** The following institutions contributed to the financing of this project:

- PARTICIPA (organisation's own funds)
- Konrad Adenauer Foundation
- Ministry of the Secretary General
- University of the Pacific of Chile.

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## II Objectives

The media has become a powerful intermediary between the citizenry and the politicians in Chile. Because of this, PARTICIPA wanted to determine the role of different media sources during election time, and whether they were providing all the necessary information so that the citizens could exercise their vote in the most informed way possible.

The project had two central objectives:

- 1) To promote the proper social and democratic functions of the media.
- 2) To promote equitable coverage of the candidates and their platforms in the media during the electoral period.

The specific objectives were as follows:

- 1) To analyse the coverage of candidates, political parties and coalitions running for Congress, in national television, radio and print media sources.
- 2) To periodically disseminate the results of the monitoring.
- 3) To promote citizens' access to the most objective and equitable journalistic coverage possible in the media.

## III Background

In a world connected via the media, politics has moved from the soapbox in the town square to the television studio. As a result, the success of candidates

for public office and political groups nowadays depends largely on the media attention they receive, especially on television.

The substantiation for this thesis rests on the theory of Agenda Setting, which states that the influence of the media lies more in its potential to define the issues and the actors on the public agenda than to induce determined behaviour.<sup>1</sup>

### The Media in Chile

In Chile, television is the most omnipresent medium. In July 2001, a viewers' poll by the Chilean National Television Council found that 98 per cent of those surveyed said that they watched television newscasts frequently and 79 per cent reported watching them every day.

However, the same study found that 58 per cent of those interviewed think that the newscasts on public television present the news too superficially and 78 per cent think that there is too much focus on news from the capital, Santiago. Certainly, there is a strong and discernible public demand for higher quality news in Chile.

In terms of political diversity on television, it is worth recalling the presidential elections that took place in December 1999. At that time, the television channels jointly organised a presidential debate with the two candidates that were the most likely to win according to the polls. The four other candidates for the presidency were left out and they protested at their exclusion.

It is important to note that in Chile the law on popular voting requires television channels to allocate one hour of airtime to each political party every month. However, this time is divided up in accordance with the results of the last popular elections. As such, the large movements and parties receive more television airtime than the smaller parties or independent candidates.

In terms of the print media, the two main political alliances exerted pressure to get the same amount of daily coverage, whereas the smaller or independent candidates were invisible.

In contrast, radio was the best performing medium, according to different studies.

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1 This theory is based on the ideas of Dr Maxwell McCombs, of the University of North Carolina and visiting professor at the School of Journalism at the Pontific Catholic University of Chile. Further information on this theory may also be found in McQuail; in Wimmer and Dominick: *Mass Media Research, an Introduction*, Wadsworth, Belmont CA, 1994.

This climate of biased and inequitable information during the campaign period is contrary to the citizen's democratic right to an informed and fair vote.

### **Parliamentary Elections**

In this context, PARTICIPA felt that the December 2001 parliamentary elections in Chile were a good opportunity to monitor the behaviour of the media in terms of information provision.

### **PARTICIPA**

PARTICIPA has a long history of promoting informed citizen participation in elections. The group does most of its work directly with youths in schools and other meeting places. In 2001, PARTICIPA decided to promote informed voting through this study, an idea that arose during discussions with the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, which provided financial support for this tool.

PARTICIPA also took into account the exhaustive research undertaken in Mexico by the Instituto Federal Electoral (IFE), which has a legal mandate to conduct similar media studies. Taking advantage of this experience, PARTICIPA invited IFE to Chile to present its methodology in a workshop.

## **IV Implementation**

### **What to Measure**

The study considered 12 media sources (including print, radio and television). An analysis was carried out of all the news from the selected sources that mentioned the different political candidates, coalitions or parties on a daily basis for 59 days.

According to the premise of Agenda Setting, which claims that the media sources have more influence on the actors and issues that predominate on the public agenda, it was decided to focus more on quantitative than qualitative variables in the study.

Analysis was done of what was reported when and by whom. The source's editorial slant was omitted. Because of this methodological decision, only journalistic reports were analysed. Opinion pieces and paid advertising were excluded from the survey.

All of the notes, articles and reports published or broadcast by the media sources that mentioned the candidates for a seat in Congress, the political parties competing in the elections, or the coalitions formed by the parties were included in the study.

The project focused on determining the range and visibility of the various politicians, parties and coalitions, regardless of whether the coverage was positive, negative or neutral.

Based on these criteria, different variables were established to measure each piece of information being analysed. To do so, a format was created containing the quantitative and qualitative variables considered in the study (see Appendix).

### **Record Card**

The record card documents the running time or length of the report and the percentage of space or time that it occupies within the newspaper or the newscast. The size of the headline was also measured and was noted down if the item appeared on the front page or as a broadcast headline.

The number of times that each candidate, party or coalition running for Congress appeared in the media sources during the period was measured.

The subject of the report was also recorded (economy, domestic politics, health, environment) and the context if the information concerned an event other than the main topic under consideration (a soldier's death, eviction of the Communist Party, etc.).

### **Complementary Qualitative Information**

Three qualitative variables were added to establish what type of news was being provided:

- 1) Character of the news in terms of importance and urgency of the report. "Hard" news is relevant to most people and must be broadcast or published urgently. "Soft" news is less significant for many people or else its publication may be delayed without losing timeliness.
- 2) News about the political actors' concrete proposals. These reports address the promises or policies of individual members of Congress (e.g. work plans, political promises, support or disavowal of bills). This variable made it possible to quantify how much of what the political actors talked about was related to the posts they were running for.
- 3) News with rebuttal. This implies assigning a code - when applicable - when the media source presented a divergent view on a given subject.

### **Media Analysed**

Twelve national media sources were analysed (television, newspapers, and radio). The selection criteria were as follows:

- 1) Most established and best known media sources.
- 2) General media (i.e. not geared to a specific niche audience).
- 3) Possessing serious journalistic credentials to which the principle of impartiality and equitable coverage could be applied.
- 4) Most influential within their genre in terms of their journalistic, advertising and/or audience impact.
- 5) Belonging to a different owner from the others.

The following specific media and programmes were selected:

MEDIUM	NAME	SOURCE
TV	Chilevisión Canal 13 Universidad Católica Televisión Nacional de Chile TVN Megavisión	21:00 News, except for commercials, commentary and obligatory political advertising.
RADIO	Cooperativa Chilena Bio-Bio Agricultura	Morning news broadcast, except for commentaries and advertising.
PRESS	El Mercurio La Tercera La Nación La Segunda	All sections except editorials, op-ed columns, advertising, classified ads, letters to the editor, social events.

### Disseminating the Results

The study was divided into three periods for analysis, from which partial results were developed and then full results of the coverage that each of the media sources gave the political candidates, the parties and the coalitions in the months leading up to the parliamentary elections.

Both the partial and the full results were presented at a press conference.

## V Results

For 59 days PARTICIPA monitored the national coverage of four television stations, four newspapers and four radio stations.

The study analysed a total of 3,966 news items. Of these, 2,018 were obtained from the press, 1,558 from radio sources and 390 from television news.

The main results include:

- 1) Ranking of candidates by coverage in the media.

- 2) Ranking of candidates in the press.
- 3) Ranking of candidates on radio.
- 4) Ranking of candidates on TV.
- 5) Candidates who appeared in headlines.
- 6) Ranking of candidates and newsworthy events.
- 7) Candidates and appearance of subjects related to their campaign proposals.
- 8) Hard/soft news about the ten candidates with the most appearances.

## Products

The study produced reports including conclusions and graphs. A CD-ROM was also published with all the information from the study, plus the tables produced in the analysis.

## Dissemination

The partial and full results of the study were presented at a press conference. The reports and the CD-ROM with all the information from the study plus the tables produced in the analysis were distributed at this event. The information was also sent by email to all the media sources that were not present at the press conference. Over 100 CD-ROMs of the results were also sent to influential figures.

## Challenges

Some media sources disseminated the results of the study. However, the coverage failed to live up to expectations because some media sources either did not show interest in the subject or did not want to publicise the results of their own performance.

The study was criticised because it concentrated on quantitative rather than qualitative data. However, this was a clear methodological decision that was taken because incorporating qualitative variables would have meant that the answers would have been subjective and therefore open to refutation. The real challenge in this study was to ensure that the variables and qualitative questions were objective and could not be disputed.

## VI Recommendations

- 1) It is crucial that the project's advisory council emphasise diversity and credibility. It may also play a key role in disseminating the results.
- 2) It is important to carry out a test run before beginning the official monitoring period so as to correct the mistakes that will crop up.

- 3) It is important to visit and/or inform the media sources that they will be monitored, so as to make the process more transparent.
- 4) To disseminate the findings of the survey, it is important to make contact in person or by telephone with the different media sources to encourage them to publish the results. One suggestion would be to organise press conferences at which the results are presented as a document, with conclusions and graphics. Reporters need to receive an executive summary including edited highlights plus a full copy of the study. The first format provides quick and easy access to the most important information while the second provides greater background detail for those who wish to delve further.

Description by: Andrea Sanhueza Echeverría, PARTICIPA Corporation Executive Director

## Appendix

### QUANTITATIVE VARIABLES

#### I. Identification Variables

1. Record card number
2. Code (a numerical code should be kept in a separate list)
3. Medium (press, radio, TV)
4. Source name (24 Horas, Teletrece, etc.)
5. Short title of the news item being analysed
6. Running time in seconds (radio and TV)
7. Number of pages of sample being analysed (press)
8. Date

#### II. Thematic Variables

9. Party/political bloc named (a numerical code for each one should be kept in a separate list)
10. Candidate named (a numerical code for each one should be kept in a separate list)
11. Subject of the news item: national and international policy; regional and community policy; economy; environment; education; science and technology; communications, arts and entertainment; police news, judicial news and security; religion and leisure; human interest; other (a numerical code for each one should be kept in a separate list)
12. Genre: news item, interview, report, other (a numerical code for each one should be kept in a separate list)

#### III. Radio and TV length and precedence variables

13. Length of news item in seconds
14. Appears in headlines or end summary (Yes/No)
15. Section where the news appears

#### IV. Press length and precedence variables

16. Square centimetres on the front page, if applicable
17. Square centimetres on inside pages

#### V. TV broadcast variables

18. Live (Yes/No)
19. Image and audio track of the candidate/party (infomercial or interview) (Yes/No)
20. Graphics (Yes /No)

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21. Image only of the candidate/party (Yes/No)
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22. Recording only of the candidate/party (infomercial or interview without image) (Yes /No)
- 
23. No image or recording of the candidate/party (announcer-read report) (Yes/No)
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**VI. Radio variables**

- 
24. Live (Yes/No)
- 
25. Recording of the candidate/party (infomercial) (Yes/No)
- 
26. Music and/or special effects: (Yes/No)
- 
27. Recording of the candidate/party (announcer-read report) (Yes/No)
- 

**VII. Press variables**

- 
28. Square centimetres of photographs and/or graphics, if applicable
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**QUALITATIVE VARIABLES**

- 
29. Type of news (hard or soft)
- 
30. With rebuttal (Yes/No)
- 
31. Campaign platform issue (Yes/No)
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# Transparent Elections: Monitoring Election Campaign Expenses, Costa Rica

## I Fact Sheet

**Name of the Tool:** Transparent Elections

**Brief Description:** Transparent Elections is the name of a project in which information regarding income and expenses of political parties during an election campaign was gathered and systematically organised. A monitoring programme was also put in place to keep track of electoral propaganda in the media. The development and implementation of the Transparent Elections Programme consisted of a Transparency Agreement that served as a starting point for the monitoring system to track the origins of a political party's resources and the spending by political parties during a campaign.

**Responsible Organisation:** Transparencia Internacional Costa Rica (TI Costa Rica).

**Creation of Tool:** Fundación Poder Ciudadano, Argentina.

**Problems Addressed by the Tool:** A lack of transparency in the funding of electoral campaigns, little or poor information about the origins and uses of political campaign funding.

**Areas of Work:** Transparency of political campaigns, electoral campaign financing.

**When the Tool was Implemented:** The project began in August 2001 and was initially planned to last until the presidential elections in February 2002. It was extended, however, for two additional months because of a second round of elections.

### Alliances:

*Poder Ciudadano, TI National Chapter in Argentina*, supported us in the design and implementation of the tool.

*Servicios Publicitarios Computarizados, S.A.*, led the technical job of measuring advertising space in print and audiovisual media.

*Fundación Ambio* provided logistical support and the office space for Transparencia Costa Rica, and the necessary services to carry out our activities.

*Transparency International Secretariat* facilitated logistical support and provided some funding.

In addition, TI Costa Rica is part of several regional support networks. The relationship to these networks served to strengthen the execution of this tool. The regional networks include: Transparency International Latin America (TILAC), the Inter-American Network for Democracy, and the Latin American Network of Observation.

**Financing:** The project was carried out using the existing capacity of Transparencia Internacional Costa Rica, with logistical support from Transparency International Secretariat, Poder Ciudadano and Fundación Ambio.

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## II Objectives

The main objective of this project is to foster preventive control and to promote general interest in civil society in transparency in electoral campaign financing. Other objectives are:

- To make financing of electoral campaigns more transparent.
- To provide objective information about the amount and origin of funds used to finance electoral campaigns.
- To generate citizen awareness about the financing of electoral campaigns.
- To generate information that will contribute to an informed voting public.
- To promote the adherence by political parties to the obligations stated in current legislation.
- To identify the strengths or weaknesses of public finance control systems.

### III Context

#### National

Complaints over irregular and illegal funding of political campaigns in recent years demonstrate the existing dangers faced by democracies today.

In the case of Costa Rica, there is a legal framework that establishes the constitutional responsibility of the state to finance electoral campaigns. Certain regulations for this provision are defined under the same framework.

With the purpose of enforcing the strict prohibition of foreign funding and upholding the principles of transparency and disclosure of donations to political organisations, the current electoral code establishes an obligation to report any contributions.

In recent years, electoral spending has increased, which has led to speculation that there are significant sources of funding apart from the allocated state resources destined for political campaigns that are economically sustaining the political parties. The use of uncontrolled funds fosters opacity and has escalated campaign spending out of proportion.

#### Transparencia Internacional Costa Rica

Electoral campaigns produce material evidence such as minutes on television and radio or space in newspapers that can be evaluated. Transparencia Internacional Costa Rica implemented this tool in order to generate a climate of respect for the use of public funds that are destined to cover campaign expenses. This tool would also serve to elaborate measurement parameters for private contributions and their incidence on campaign spending for the first and second round of elections in February and April 2002 respectively.

This tool is based on a model previously applied in Argentina and Peru. The logic behind this tool is to follow the funds acquired and spent, enquire about expenses and compare the information to what was reported by the political parties. In the end, all information must be made public.

### IV Implementation

#### First Stage: Agreement

Signature of the Transparency Agreement, 24 August 2001 (see Appendix 1)

As a result of the initiative of TI Costa Rica, seven of the eight registered presidential candidates signed up to the agreement and pledged to make all fi-

financial information regarding the funding of their campaigns public upon request.

The task of collecting the signatures of all the candidates was very critical since it was essential to move quickly in this phase. A considerable lag in time from the public announcement about the agreement to the collection of signatures meant that interest in the initiative could be lost. To reach our objective, we personally met with candidates, beginning with the candidates who were more inclined to sign, and later concentrating on reluctant candidates. We could then naturally take advantage of the peer pressure generated by those who had already signed.

The points incorporated into the agreement were highlighted during the previous general elections as the most important elements on which all parties were obligated to present information in order to justify their right to receive the state's contribution to their campaigns (See the Agreement in Appendix 1).

### **Second Stage: Collecting Information**

During this stage, parties were prompted to deliver information according to the terms to which they had subscribed under the Transparency Agreement. The entire agreement appears in Appendix 1, but the basic information required was as follows:

Regarding Income received for the Campaign:

- a. Amount and date of bond issues for political debt that parties agree to produce in accordance with the law. They must include the indication of the type of bond, amount of issue and number of bonds, as well as the number of people that subscribe to them each month.
- b. In the event that these bonds are discounted in the National Financial Sector or with private companies, an indication of the name of the financial institutions, amounts, discount percentages and interest rates should be included as well.
- c. Loan amounts, with precise indications of the creditor's name and financial terms of obligation (amount, deadline, interest rate, name of bondsmen, location)
- d. Amount and date of contributions and donations in cash or kind greater than 100,000 colones, guaranteed or not guaranteed with later bonds or issues, refundable or non-refundable, with an indication of the donors' names and guarantees and conditions if these exist.

Regarding all campaign expenses:

- a. Amount and date for contracts that are agreed to *spread political propaganda* in the media with indication of all discounts received in value or kind, number of collaborators hired and production costs for the making of advertisements.
- b. Amount and date of expenses under the concept of transport and vehicle rental with the indication of contract rates, fuel and repair expenses, insurance and driver salaries.
- c. Expenses for commissions, interest payments and discounts incurred during negotiations for financing of the campaign.
- d. Expenses for honoraria, indicating the name of contracted professionals, modality of payment, taxes withheld and a clear indication of the purpose of hiring the services.
- e. Expenses for special services, indicating the people that have received such amounts and the objective pursued by such expenses.

We referred for information on party expenses to the Federal Elections Tribunal. Although this information is accessible to the public, there has been no effort to make it public in any way. The data obtained revealed serious inconsistencies between what the parties declared and what was actually spent. Independent monitoring of party expenses showed that from the beginning expenses exceeded provisions and budgets.

We were not surprised by the reluctance of the traditional parties to disclose truthfully information about their campaign expenses that legally should be made public. However, the persistence of TI Costa Rica throughout the course of the campaign allowed it to overcome this reluctance and point out the weaknesses of the campaign finance system.

The main local media enthusiastically supported the initiative for more transparency. The political parties were compelled to face their responsibilities and had to make a public commitment, at least for the time being, to significantly reduce their campaign expenses and to make all information regarding their funding public. Some have even proposed to submit their expenses to independent audits.

### **Third Stage: Systematically Organise Information**

This stage was characterised by the systematic organisation, cross-reference, comparison and diffusion of information.

The local media supported our efforts by providing information throughout the process.

Finally, and during a second round of elections, monitoring was extended for two more months. During this process, the state did not contribute any funds to the campaign.

### **Diffusion**

The information generated by TI Costa Rica could make an impact only if it were made public. For that reason, TI Costa Rica set out to motivate journalists and communicators to disseminate the information collected.

The information about income and expenses reported by political parties and the monitoring of propaganda expenses up to the conclusion of the first round of elections was made public by TI Costa Rica. TI's work has been to spread information that should be legally public, but has not been available to the public for diverse reasons.

TI Costa Rica brought the voters precise information on election expenses that it had collected from the parties. It also publicised information that it had obtained through the Supreme Elections Tribunal and the General Comptroller's Office. As a result, precise information about electoral expenses was made available from the start.

It is worth pointing out that the bulk of activities were carried out on a volunteer basis. To this effect, we received voluntary help from many people who put their time and knowledge at our disposal.

## **V Results**

The main results of Transparent Elections are:

1. The signature of a Transparency Agreement between candidates.
2. A website with information about campaign finance in Costa Rica. [www.transparenciacr.org](http://www.transparenciacr.org).
3. The positioning of the issue of financing of electoral campaigns in political and social discourse. The parties, candidates and the electoral authorities all made statements and gave opinions on campaign finance.
4. The publication of donor lists by the Supreme Elections Tribunal (<http://www.tse.go.cr/contribuyentes.html>).
5. A workshop to present the results at the end of the process.
6. The important placement of TI Costa Rica in a civil society context. TI Costa Rica has managed to promote itself in an innovative way and to establish election campaign finance a topic of national relevance.

7. A pledge to continue the execution of this project in order to promote further changes in election finance.

Significant deficiencies in electoral control institutions were discovered, due to the difficulties that exist in legally accessing public information.

During the execution of this initiative, it was possible to identify specific weaknesses in the process of campaign finance control that came from both the public sector and political parties. The weaknesses that were pointed out can be corrected and avoided. For this reason, a plan to propose a reform in the electoral code, which will be submitted for consultation with the relevant actors in order to ensure that it will be approved as soon as possible, was put in execution immediately after the monitoring process. It is important to make sure that the country will operate with greater transparency and greater accountability with regard to contributions and spending during the electoral process, especially for municipal elections that will be held in December 2002.

The strong positioning of the issue of election financing in the public eye, and the criticism for a lack of transparency and excessive spending, had a deep impact on the two main candidates that ended up in the second round. The concepts of transparency and accountability became the main focus of criticism of the candidates. As a result, the candidates pledged to ensure more transparent electoral management and they manifested their willingness to be subject to the public's scrutiny.

The effort was strongly supported by the media, which joined the popular initiative for greater transparency in campaign financing.

The parties pledged to reduce significantly their campaign expenditures. They also made a commitment to make public all information about contributions. Some parties even proposed to subject expenses to independent audits.

### Examples of Information Published by TI Costa Rica

- The Partido Unidad Social Cristiana reported income of 59.1 million colones<sup>1</sup> and expenses of 1.3 billion colones<sup>2</sup> to the Tribunal as of last 31 December. The difference – more than 1.2 billion colones<sup>3</sup> – is quite substantial. TI Costa Rica confirmed that the same party reported contributions made by companies that are not registered in the Public Register, and from people whom they failed to identify correctly with their respective identity numbers.

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1 Corresponds to US\$169,477 (exchange rate of 11 July 2002)

2 Corresponds to US\$3,797,603 (exchange rate of 11 July 2002)

3 Corresponds to US\$3,441,156 (exchange rate of 11 July 2002)

- The information submitted by Partido Liberación Nacional was notably different from what TI Costa Rica had monitored. On the matter of propaganda, the party failed to report the significant sum of 375 million colones<sup>4</sup> to the Tribunal. In addition, when TI Costa Rica publicised the information about contributions submitted by the parties, there were many individuals named on the donation lists who had never made any contribution.

## VI Recommendations

In order to get signatures from all candidates, initial pressure was put on the candidates of emerging parties. Later, the other candidates were approached, which added pressure generated by the signatures from candidates with less chance of winning the election.

The agreement concentrated on specific categories derived from a study of party expenses conducted during the previous elections. More appropriate measurement parameters were not available. For future implementations of this tool, the fields of action will be clearly outlined and the issues to be monitored will be more precise.

To achieve optimal coverage of the project, we recommend identifying some of the influential journalists who may become interested in this topic and then provided with the relevant information on a regular basis.

This model can be applied in any country with minimal legal provisions that expressly limit acceptable procedures for obtaining contributions and reporting expenses. Of course, it would be necessary to adapt the methodology to the particular legislation and conditions of each country. In general terms, processes are easy to apply and require, above all, precise dedication regarding the monitoring of party action. Furthermore, systematic diffusion is required to spread detailed information that results from the monitoring with a strong emphasis on detected irregularities.

Description by: Roxana Salazar and Mario Carazo

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<sup>4</sup> Corresponds to US\$1,075,361 (exchange rate of 11 July 2002)

## Appendix 1

### Transparency Agreement

All signing presidential candidates, in the face of public opinion and in full exercise of our civic responsibilities, will subscribe to the present Transparency Agreement.

We consider that democratic strengthening begins with transparency and accountability. One way to guarantee that we reach this goal is to offer transparency in our finances and campaign spending. With this in mind, we pledge the following:

We have formally and irrevocably agreed to make public all information that constitutes proof of the transparency of our presidential campaigns. To this end, we will collaborate with the civic association Transparencia Internacional Costa Rica.

This patriotic commitment to which we have subscribed voluntarily includes:

FIRST: We are committed not to spend more than the amounts to which we are entitled to by law: 0.1 percent of Gross Domestic Product.

SECOND: We have given irrevocable orders to the treasurers of our campaigns and political parties we represent so that they produce monthly reports and authorise the publication of relevant information concerning campaign income and expenses:

Regarding income received for the campaign:

- a. Amount and date of bond issues for political debt that parties agree to produce in accordance with the law. They must include the indication of the type of bond, amount of issue and number of bonds, as well as the number of people that subscribe to them each month.
- b. In the event that these bonds are discounted in the National Financial Sector or with private companies, an indication of the name of the financial institutions, amounts, discount percentages and interest rates should be included as well.
- c. Loan amounts, with precise indications of the creditor's name and financial terms of obligation (amount, deadline, interest rates, name of bondsmen, location)
- d. Amount and date of contributions and donations in cash or kind greater than 100,000 colones, guaranteed or not guaranteed with later bonds or is-

sues, refundable or non-refundable, with an indication of the donors' names and guarantees and conditions if these exist.

Regarding all campaign expenses:

- a. Amount and date for contracts that are agreed to spread political propaganda in the media with indication of all discounts received in value or kind, number of collaborators hired and production costs for the making of advertisements.
- b. Amount and date of expenses under the concept of transport and vehicle rental with the indication of contract rates, fuel and repair expenses, insurance and driver salaries.
- c. Expenses for commissions, interest payments and discounts incurred during negotiations for financing of the campaign.
- d. Expenses for honoraria, indicating the name of contracted professionals, modality of payment, taxes withheld and a clear indication of the purpose of hiring the services.
- e. Expenses for special services, indicating the people that have received such amounts and the objective pursued by such expenses.

Such information will be presented to Transparencia Internacional Costa Rica, with copy to the Supreme Elections Tribunal so that it can be verified within the first ten days of the month following their execution, allowing both entities to obtain all that is necessary in order to make all information public.

Transparencia Internacional Costa Rica, on its behalf, assumes full responsibility for the publication of information in the same uniform format used by campaign and party treasurers without adding any comments and pledging to maintain absolute objectivity in the handling of all data. The organisation expressly points out that its role is to present all information objectively to all citizens concerned. To such effect, TI Costa Rica will create a website at [www.transparenciacr.org](http://www.transparenciacr.org). This website will allow indiscriminate access to all users that wish to consult it. TI Costa Rica will send a copy of all the information incorporated on the website, which includes all data received, to the Supreme Elections Tribunal to confirm its absolute veracity.

As a guarantee of the honest and correct management of all information received, TI Costa Rica offers the names of the following distinguished citizens: Leonardo Garnier Rímolo, Juan José Sobrado Chaves and Helio Fallas Venegas.

San José, 24 August 2001.

Rolando Araya Monge  
Presidential Candidate  
PARTIDO LIBERACIÓN NACIONAL

Abel Pacheco de la Espriella  
Presidential Candidate  
PARTIDO UNIDAD SOCIAL CRISTIANA

Otto Guevara Guth  
Presidential Candidate  
PARTIDO MOVIMIENTO LIBERTARIO

Walter Muñoz Céspedes  
Presidential Candidate  
PARTIDO INTEGRACIÓN NACIONAL

Walter Coto Molina  
Presidential Candidate  
COALICION CAMBIO 2000

Ottón Solís Fallas  
Presidential Candidate  
PARTIDO ACCIÓN CIUDADANA

Vladimir De La Cruz  
Presidential Candidate  
PARTIDO FUERZA DEMOCRÁTICA COSTARRICENSE

Justo Orozco  
Presidential Candidate  
PARTIDO RENOVACIÓN

(NOTE: This document was signed by all people on the list with the exception of Mr Rolando Araya Monge)

## Appendix 2

### Press Release, Transparencia Costa Rica 11 February 2002

In declarations given to the press last Saturday, Fernando Naranjo Villalobos, the candidate for the first vice presidency from the Liberación Nacional Party, made declarations that we must comment on because of their source.

They refer to our insistence that candidate Rolando Araya Monge adhere to the commitment with the citizens to make public the origins of his resources and the destination of his expenses carried out toward the second round elections next 7 April. Mr Naranjo claims that the Supreme Elections Tribunal already exercises enough control and that 'there is no need for a private organisation to become involved'.

All civic attitudes are an expression of civil rights. Politicians must be the first to respect such rights.

During the second round, contending parties will not be able to obtain funds from the state. They are therefore obliged to accept private contributions that are not subject to control by the Supreme Elections Tribunal or the General Comptroller.

The publication of private contributions and expenses is an act that depends exclusively on the candidate's will. There is absolutely no legal obligation to report such expenses to anyone.

Citizens demand transparency and accountability of those who wish to govern over them. The message is very clear. The time when politicians afforded themselves the privilege of making public information confidential is over.

Making any requested information public should be a voluntary action on behalf of Mr Araya Monge. If he does not wish to respond to such a simple request, the citizens are advised of the reluctance of the Liberación Nacional Party to be transparent and accountable.

In the end, the citizens will decide for themselves.

# Accountability Benchmarks for Political Parties, Germany

## I Fact Sheet

**Name of the Tool:** Accountability Benchmarks for Political Parties

**Brief Description:** In the context of lobbying for corruption prevention measures this tool is used to identify the main areas in need of improvement and to formulate questions that go to the core of the problem, thereby comparing the answers from political parties and monitoring subsequent performance.

We identified a number of standard questions about key issues involving corruption that we wanted to ask to political parties prior to elections. By asking all the parties the same questions, we wanted to build a reference for an easy and standardised comparison between all of them. Furthermore, we wanted to use their answers at a later stage of the process as a reference to monitor their work after they had been elected.

**Responsible NGO:** TI Germany and its regional groups in Berlin, Hamburg and Munich.

**Creation of the Tool:** The tool has been used in a grass-roots context throughout Western Europe since the 1970s. Typical past topics were related to social and civil rights or peace issues. The tool was adapted to the context by TI Germany.

**Problems Addressed by the Tool:** Politicians and their parties are perceived as making general statements in favour of fighting corruption, especially before elections. We wanted them to express clearly what their positions and proposals were with regard to corruption prevention measures, so that we could later monitor how well they fulfilled their promises.

**Processes:** Public question-and-answer – process about corruption prevention policies.

**Areas of Work:** Lobbying work, in particular with a local or regional focus.

**When the Tool was Implemented:** Munich, January-February 2002, Hamburg, August-September 2001; Berlin, August 2001 and continuing for the federal elections starting July 2002.

**Financing:** TI Germany covered the costs of implementing this tool, approximately 500 Euros (See Implementation).

**For Additional Information, Contact:**

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## II Objectives

Our primary objective was to help bring corruption to the centre of public pre-election discussions. We searched for a tool that could be used to help us do this. At the beginning, we thought it might be effective to ask exactly the same questions to everyone who might one day become influential in regional politics. On the basis of the questions, and their answers, we would then communicate to:

- a) the general public what the parties and politicians viewed as necessary or important for good governance, and
- b) to the respondents of the questions, so as to follow up on their answers and promises.

We felt from the start that such an initiative might be useful for regional TI groups.

The first immediate result we expected to get from the answers was a general idea as to whether the public actors shared concerns about the same problems, whether they saw a need for action, and what measures they envisioned putting in place.

The process should be entirely transparent from the beginning to the end. The questions and the respondents' names would be made public at the same time the questions were sent. There would be a time limit for the answers and a date would be announced when all the answers received would be made public. And then there would also be a pledge from our side to come back after a certain period to ask the same questions again and see what had changed and whether any of the promises indeed had been kept.

We decided to refrain from lobbying individual politicians in this process, among other reasons, for a lack of resources. This is why we decided to stick with the described benchmarking process and focused only on political parties.

### III Context

**The Country:** Although we have had some remarkable cases of political corruption in Germany practically every year within the last half century (as well as systematic corruption under the Nazi dictatorship), political corruption has been exposed to the public extensively and discussed systematically only within the last ten years – in parallel with the OECD (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development) process. In 1999 the OECD Convention on Combating Bribery of Foreign Public Officials in International Business Transactions came into force, marking a turning point in the international fight against corruption and opening up space for real dialogue on the issue.

Particularly important for the creation of our benchmarking campaign in Berlin was the fact that the coalition government there broke apart after the discovery of a systematic graft and corruption scheme involving a state-owned bank. One of the former coalition partners claimed that the necessary steps to fight graft and corruption were, in effect, blocked by the other party. From this, we therefore expected a contest for the best methods to fight corruption, as well as a public discussion. The media, to a certain extent, had been very keen to scrutinise the details of the scandal.

The context in which we were working was that of forced multi-party elections that had come about because of corruption. There was a large segment of the electorate and media expecting ‘something to be done’ about corruption. This was also true for Hamburg – our second region for implementation of the benchmarking process. It was in Hamburg that graft had become such a problem over decades in which Social Democrats were holding power that many hoped for a change. A new party was even formed with a programme to ‘clean up the city’. Parties in Germany had been exposed before to such a benchmarking process on different topics. For that reason, we could expect that they would generally be open to answer our questions.

**The Chapter:** In Berlin, we worked with a total of eight, and an average of about four, active members, with levels of participation changing at certain stages. The benchmarking for the elections in Hamburg was prepared primarily by the Berlin group (which also included our chapter president from Hamburg) and implemented with approximately the same time schedule as in Berlin. When a few months later the same tool was used in the Munich region, the group there joined forces with people from the Agenda 21 campaign (related to the UN environment conference/Rio de Janeiro process), which helped the process by adding their own questions to those of the Munich group. In future benchmarking, however, it will always have to be decided whether combining questions is seen as a dilution or enrichment.

## IV Implementation

### Brainstorming Stage

We began by brainstorming about the tools we might use to help focus the public discussion on corruption prevention during the election campaign. Instead of asking individual politicians whom we thought were important, or with whom we had contacts, we decided to pursue the benchmarking campaign, and hence approached only political parties.

We then concentrated on what we believed were the most urgent issues that needed improvement within the next five years. We chose the following issues:

- Public procurement
- Graft in the relations between politics and public enterprises
- Nepotism in public administration and public enterprises

### Formulating Questions and Media Coverage

We tried to formulate questions about each of these topics. Four months prior to Election Day, we had formulated standard questions (The 13 questions used in the Berlin benchmarking can be found in the Appendix).

After a final discussion of the questions, we sent them to the party offices and arranged for a press conference on the premises of the Federal Press Conference (the location where many of the important political press conferences on the federal level are held). The press conference was held about two months prior to the elections. Using this venue proved to be an effective use of our resources, as roughly 60 journalists from various German and international media were in attendance. We later found about 15 different articles in at least twice as many newspapers. In addition, about half a dozen radio and TV interviews were broadcast.

The focus in the media coverage, however, was mostly on either particular scandals that had been previously reported on by the media, or simply on the fact that we had held the press conference. Typical questions from the journalists tended to focus on statistics and sometimes even finger-pointing, rather than on the causes of corruption and potential solutions.

### Responses and Evaluation

The parties had about three weeks to return their answers. Surprisingly, this was adequate time for all parties in Berlin, except for the one that had broken away from the coalition in order to fight corruption more effectively. The new-

ly founded clean-up party in Hamburg, which could in any respect be called populist and chauvinistic, did not consider it necessary to answer our questions and did not even approach us when we publicised their stance. They still won about 20% of the vote and formed a coalition government with the conservative Christian Democratic Union (CDU), which had previously been the opposition party. The coalition also changed in Berlin: replacing the conservative CDU as the ruling party, the Social Democrats formed a new government with the Party of Democratic Socialism.

We later evaluated the answers to the questions that we had posed. We had made sure beforehand that yes/no answers would not be valid. We also had tried to formulate the questions so that the answers could be standardised and possibly displayed in a chart. The press conference at which we presented our results was not in the same setting as the earlier press conference, albeit at the address. We were well prepared for this closing press conference. However only a handful of journalists attended and the media coverage was, as a result, low. We also displayed our analysis and the answers to all questions on our website.

### **Post-Election Follow-Up**

After the elections the next step was to evaluate the coalition agreements. In Berlin, the coalition was formed between the Social Democrats and the Democratic Socialists (the former communists). The latter had turned in the most detailed answers, which closely resembled the federal anti-corruption decree (which unfortunately was never put into force by the federal government). The word corruption or similar terms were not even mentioned in the coalition agreement. Only in the area of construction procurements was a rather general statement about the need for change included (this was an area in which several public employees had already been arrested and more prosecutions were known to be in preparation). The bankrupt, state-owned bank received a guarantee worth about 30 billion euros and the consultants employed in the restructuring received about 96 million euros, making it a hushed up scandal comparable in size to that of the Enron case. After the elections when we approached the most prominent politician of the Party of Democratic Socialism, by then the minister responsible for economics in Berlin, he replied laconically that he was now bound in his activities by his coalition partner. We will have to ask again.

In the meantime, we have met with the Social Democratic Party leader, who is also the senator responsible for planning and construction, and his deputy for anti-corruption matters. These meetings have proved to be very useful. We believe these officials to be dedicated servants with whom we can begin to dis-

cuss different approaches to fighting corruption. We hope to present our approach in the foreseeable future to all the employees of this administration.

The next scheduled steps are a six-month and a 12-month evaluation. We discovered through our questioning that Berlin is one of the few places in Germany that does not have an anti-corruption decree. We also learned that certain administrations have blocked such a decree because they have considered it to be ineffective.

All the funding for this campaign came from TI Germany. The main costs stemmed from working time (which in this case was voluntary), room rentals for the press conference, various mailings and the website. The estimate without the voluntary working time donations would be below 500 Euros. However a relatively high expenditure for visibility, such as for the press conference, is worthwhile.

## V Results

In addition to the considerable media coverage given to our campaign, the important immediate effects of it have been:

- to set up a continuous agenda for further activities in the region, which in turn encouraged more people to participate;
- to create an ongoing agenda for discussions with politicians, media and others;
- to create an incentive for checking back with our interview partners to learn what actions have been undertaken to fight corruption;
- to intensify contacts with other groups working in related areas such as Agenda 21 and the European Network for Business Ethics;
- to receive several new members who were explicitly interested in the benchmarking process.

For TI Germany the tool is also a measure of the effectiveness of our lobbying efforts to provoke action in the fight against corruption.

## VI Future Recommendations

For any future implementations, we recommend:

- To concentrate on as few questions as possible. (For any future implementation, we recommend starting with the three most urgent problems. Ideally, only one question should be formulated for each topic - with a maximum of three questions per topic and no more than ten questions.)

- To create some graphics with which to display the answers (at least as a table or chart).
- To try to provoke genuinely new answers (to avoid quoting from party propaganda).
- To 'personalise' questions (i.e., monitoring the initiatives and caucus behaviour of individual parliamentarians).
- To organise for each topic that is addressed working groups that monitor the performance of respondents for an extended period of time and continue discussion with them.
- To institutionalise the process so that it begins with new questions, and monitoring continues for the next legislative period.

Description by: Björn Rohde-Liebenau

## Appendix 1

### Benchmarking Questions for the 2001 Berlin Election

Transparency International (TI) is an international organisation, which has been working since 1993 to increase transparency in economy, politics and the public services and has dedicated itself to the fight against corruption. The German chapter, Transparency International Deutschland (TI-D), considers the elections in Berlin and Hamburg and the recent events in these two cities (the banking scandal in Berlin and the questionable subcontracting procedures of the Work and Social Administration in Hamburg) as an opportune time to ask the political parties in both cities where they stand on the subject of public accountability and transparent governance. We expect to receive the answers to our questions by 23 August 2001 and plan to make public the steps we will follow in this benchmarking.

This is the first step of a campaign, during which the conceptions of the parties will be put under close scrutiny and their achievements following the elections reported.

The next steps will be to:

- Evaluate the answers and publish the results by an ad hoc study group designated by TI-D.
- Initiate a public debate together with candidates and parties prior to the elections about the misuse of public power in the case of non-transparent attributions of public works contracts or subsidies.
- Request the political parties to express specific commitments in case of government participation.
- Compare and contrast the government policy and the action of the opposition parties after the elections with statements made and positions taken.
- Organise a similar campaign for the next elections, drawing on the experience acquired during this one.

### Questions Posed to Political Parties

1. Transparency International suggested creating an Integrity Pact to guarantee more transparency in the procurement procedure used for the construction of Schönefeld International Airport. Under an Integrity Pact, all parties make a binding commitment that they will neither pay nor take bribes. A breach causes the contract to be rendered void. The shareholders of the Berlin-Brandenburg airport holding company (the federal government and the states

of Berlin and Brandenburg) saw no need for such a pact. However, the procurement procedure for the construction of the airport had to be cancelled because of a conflict-of-interest issue. Consequently, there have been delays and substantial additional costs for the taxpayer. This is only one example of inappropriate behaviour with regard to procurement procedures.

Therefore, we ask:

- a) By which means does your party want to avoid future conflicts of interest, inappropriate assignment decisions and corruption in procurement procedures?
- b) Do you think that the laws, rules and institutions governing procurement procedures are sufficient? Which measures should be taken to ameliorate the procurement procedure?
- c) Do you have suggestions on how such procedures could be organised in a more transparent way in the future?

2. The example of the city of Hamburg - and probably the city of Berlin too - illustrates how certain practices in the subcontracting of work for government projects and other state-supported programmes lead to questionable behaviour - a direct result of the lack of transparency and blatant abuse of state power through political influence.

We ask:

- a) How is your party going to guarantee that the procedures for disbursing public money to institutions are transparent and that the conditions are made accessible to all interested parties?
- b) In which way should the public be informed about the periodically determined allocation of resources, including names of the beneficiaries, funding aims and the development of the supported project?
- c) Which measures do you think should be in place to prevent conflicts of interest among employees of the public administrations that are promoting enterprise investment?
- d) Which measures do you think are necessary to prevent politicians at the end of their careers from using their connections for private gain, as was the case of the former EU Commissioner Martin Bangemann? Do you think it would be necessary to implement new regulations similar to those in place in other countries?

3. The Berlin banking scandal revealed questionable collusive behaviour between the political structures of the city and the major sectors in which the state of Berlin participated.

We ask:

- a) Do you consider it acceptable that a prominent politician (such as Klaus Landowsky, the president of the CDU in Berlin) simultaneously holds a leading position in a public enterprise and a government administration?
- b) Using which measures will your party prevent the intertwining of parliamentary control and executive functions in public enterprises?
- c) How does your party want to guarantee that when politicians are named to the seats of the supervisory board of enterprises their qualifications are the deciding factors in the naming process, instead of an intention to secure influence over a particular political party?

4. The banking scandal caused enormous financial damage to the city of Berlin.

We ask:

- a) Do you consider it reasonable that the participation of the state in enterprises is limited to those that are of particular importance with regard to the public interest?
- b) How does your party want to guarantee that the policies and strategic positioning of enterprises correspond to the interests of the public and do not outweigh any private economic interests?
- c) Do you agree that the losses of enterprises, as well as other financial expenses of public enterprises, should not be paid for out of the public budget and that the parliament and the public should be informed of such developments and risks on a timely basis?