

**BBC Governors' inquiry into the impartiality and accessibility
of BBC coverage of the EU**

Content Analysis

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Morrison Media Consultants

1: Summary

Two weeks of BBC coverage of the EU were analysed.

From this coverage, four BBC EU stories were selected. These were examined in detail and, where possible, compared with coverage in the press and by non-BBC broadcasters.

BBC coverage of two of these stories raises significant concerns in the context of this study:

- In its coverage of one story (Peter Mandelson's hearing as Trade Commissioner) a potentially significant piece of information was excluded by the BBC which could suggest a Europhile bias
- In its coverage of the second story (a Newsnight report claiming that EU farm policy would destroy English apple orchards) questions of accuracy and fair dealing arise which could give rise to suggestions of a Eurosceptic bias

The third story (a Home Office announcement about the scale of migration from Eastern European EU members) raises some concerns about whether the Conservative point of view was adequately represented in some BBC outlets.

The fourth story (the Commission report on the accession of Turkey) does not raise concerns in the context of this study. It is a good example of the BBC's ability to present complex and unfamiliar material in a balanced and accessible way for a wide range of audiences.

On more general issues:

- There is some evidence that, by reporting a narrow range of the available stories, the BBC may underplay the scale and pervasiveness of EU activity.
- Although the BBC reports a narrower range of stories than the press, it carries a wider range of stories, and treats them in greater depth, than its broadcast competitors.
- There is some evidence that the BBC could do more (particularly on TV) to supply background and context, and explain jargon.

2: Impartiality

The BBC's aspiration in its news reporting is an accurate and rounded picture of events and their context, including comment from an appropriate range of voices, but excluding any editorialising by the BBC itself.

We report the facts first. Understand and explain their context. Provide professional judgements where appropriate, but never promote our own personal opinions. Openness and independence of mind is at the heart of practising accuracy and impartiality. We will strive to be fair and open minded by reflecting all significant strands of opinion, and by exploring the range and conflict of views. Testing a wide range of views with the evidence is essential if we are to give our audiences the greatest possible opportunity to decide for themselves on the issues of the day. (BBC Producers' Guidelines)

It should be noted that the BBC does not equate impartiality with neutrality.

A reporter may express a professional, journalistic judgement but not a personal opinion. Judgement must be recognised as perceptive and fair. (BBC Producers' Guidelines)

3: Process

We carried out a detailed analysis of two separate weeks of mainstream BBC news output. For the purposes of comparison we also looked at a sample of national newspapers and non-BBC broadcasters.

From this material we quarried data on:

- **Range of stories** (What stories were available? Which did the BBC cover, which exclude?)
- **Range of information within stories** (What information was available? Which information did the BBC include, which exclude?)
- **Range of voice and opinions reported**
- **Depth and clarity of background and context supplied**

The general approach is not to draw conclusions but to highlight areas which raise questions - on which the panel may care to come to conclusions.

Stories analysed

The stories to be analysed are those that reflect the terms of reference - i.e. that cover:

- Debate about Britain's place in Europe
- The activities of EU institutions

(We have excluded stories that make reference to the EU but are essentially about something else. For example we have excluded many stories about UKIP from our first week of monitoring because they were essentially about party funding and leadership, not about debate on Britain's place in Europe.)

Weeks analysed

The two weeks were chosen at random. They were:

- first week of October 2004
- second week of November 2004

The news agenda

As it happened, the first week contained a number of significant EU events - Peter Mandelson's hearing as Trade Commissioner-elect, and the publication of the Commission report on the accession of Turkey. Other major stories competing for space included:

- Conservative Party Conference
- UKIP losing its financial backing from Paul Sykes
- Publication of the Iraq Survey Group report
- Murder of the Iraq hostage Ken Bigley

The second week was rather quieter in EU news terms. The EU story that drew the most coverage during this week was a report from the Home Office on the extent of migration into the UK from accession states in Eastern Europe. Other major stories competing for space included:

- Death of Yassir Arafat
- The assault on Fallujah
- Aftermath of the Berkshire rail crash

BBC output monitored

The BBC output monitored was selected to reflect mainstream, not niche or specialist, output - in other words the kind of news output consumed by most people and therefore the kind of output it is most important for the BBC to get right. Radio gets its biggest audiences at breakfast, TV gets its biggest audience in the evening, and our sample reflects this:

BBC TV

BBC One	Six O’Clock News	[1800-1830]
BBC One	Ten O’Clock News	[2200-2230]
BBC Two	Newsnight	[1030-2315]

BBC Radio

Radio 4	Today	[0600-0900]
Radio 4	1800 news bulletin	[1800-1830]
Radio 5Live	Breakfast	[0600-0900]

BBC online

bbc.co.uk/news

[Broadcast schedules sometimes vary on Fridays and at weekends]

Other broadcasts sampled

Non-BBC broadcasters:

Channel 4	Channel 4 News	[1900-2000]
ITV	Evening News	[2230-2300]
Sky	Live at Five	[1700-1800]

[Broadcast schedules sometimes vary on Fridays and at weekends]

It is worth noting that Sky, as a rolling news channel, will often give greater priority to breaking stories rather than events that have happened earlier in the day. Therefore its agenda can be expected to differ from competitors which aspire to be in some degree “bulletins of record.” This turned to be the case in the period under review for this study.

We looked at all the journalism in each programme, excluding only newspaper reviews.

Newspaper sampled

The sample of newspapers includes popular, mid-market and serious titles, both Europhile and Eurosceptic in editorial stance, and their Sunday stablemates:

Sun/ News of the World
Mirror/ Sunday Mirror
Guardian/ Observer
Times/ Sunday Times
Telegraph/ Sunday Telegraph
Financial Times

We looked at the whole editorial contents of the newspapers sampled, excluding only letters pages and sections (such as Guardian Editor) which are simply extracts of other newspapers.

4: Health warning

Comparisons of media output are inherently problematic. The agendas of, say, a breakfast show and an evening news show on the same day are likely to be very different - but the difference is more likely to reflect their different positions in the news cycle than any difference in underlying selection criteria.

The difficulties multiply when comparisons between broadcast and print are attempted. Editors of broadcast bulletins have only a tiny percentage of the space available to newspaper editors. The chart below compares the space available to one TV bulletin and one newspaper on a single day during the period under review.

October 6 2004	Stories/Items	Words
Daily Mail	170	100,000
BBC Ten O'clock News	10	4,500

This great disparity of space inevitably means that some stories that appear in the press will be excluded from TV and radio bulletins. (As this study shows, bbc.co.uk/news, which has a great deal of space at its disposal, reports a significantly wider range of EU stories than its BBC broadcast equivalents.) Exclusion of a story by BBC broadcasters does not necessarily indicate partiality.

In addition, the experience of reading a newspaper is different from viewing a bulletin - and this too affects the editorial decisions behind the contents. Newspaper reading is non-linear: newspaper editors do not expect every reader to read every story, and so they can include stories they know will appeal only to a minority of their readership.

Watching a TV news bulletin, on the other hand, is a linear experience: editors of news bulletins try to keep their audience over the whole course of the programme. As a result, they will inevitably tend to look for stories with maximum appeal across all audience segments - which may mean excluding stories of great interest, but only to a minority of viewers. Again, exclusion does not necessarily indicate partiality.

5: Analysis

5.1: Range of Stories

In the two weeks logged, our press sample covered more than 100 EU stories. For the purposes of this study we have taken these as the EU stories available that week. Over the same period, our BBC sample covered about a dozen EU stories.

Of the 100-plus EU stories carried in the press, many were covered by only one or two titles. When we looked for stories covered by more than half the titles - in other words, a core EU press agenda - the number of stories fell sharply. In Week One, there were nine press stories about the EU covered by four or more of our sample titles.

Nearly all the topics covered by the BBC programmes sampled in Week One were a subset of this core press agenda. The non-BBC broadcasters sampled covered a narrower range of EU stories than the BBC.

WEEK ONE		Newspapers							BBC							Non-BBC		
3-9 October 2004		Su	Mi	MI	Ti	TI	FT	Gd	6	10	NN	Tod	1800	R5L	Onl	Sky	ITV	C4N
1	EU yearbook map omits Wales	x	x	x	x	x	x	x				x			x			
2	Blair proposes EU reaction force for Africa	x	x	x	x	x	x	x							x			
3	Mandelson hearing before European Parliament	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	X	x	x		x	x
4	EC says UK Customs treat 'booze cruises' too harshly		x		x	x	x	x	x				X	x	x			
5	EC publishes Turkey accession report			x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	X	x	x			x
6	Gordon Brown criticises EU aid policy	x			x		x	x							x			
7	Ofgem wants EU to probe gas supplies from Europe			x	x		x	x				x		x				
8	EU/US begin trade dispute over aircraft subsidies				x	x	x	x			x	x		x	x			x
9	UK rivers "will fail new EU water purity standards"				x	x	x	x										
3-9 October 2004		Su	Mi	MI	Ti	TI	FT	Gd	6	10	NN	Tod	1800	R5L	Onl	Sky	ITV	C4N
WEEK ONE		Newspapers							BBC							Non-BBC		

[Su:Sun/News of the World; Mi: Mirror/Sunday Mirror; MI: Daily Mail/Mail on Sunday; Ti: Times/Sunday Times; TI: Daily Telegraph/Sunday Telegraph; FT: Financial Times; Gd: Guardian/Observer; Onl: bbc.co.uk/news]

In Week Two, a similar picture emerges. Most of the BBC EU stories covered were a sub-set of the core EU press agenda for that week. Overall there was less BBC coverage of the EU than in Week One. The non-BBC news programmes sampled gave little (and in two cases, no) space to EU coverage that week.

WEEK TWO		Newspapers							BBC							Non-BBC		
7-13 Nov 2004		Su	Mi	Ml	Ti	Tl	FT	Gd	6	10	NN	Tod	1800	R5L	Onl	Sky	ITV	C4N
1	Mandelson CBI speech	x	x	x	x	x	x	x					x		x			
2	91,000 migrants from new EU states registered in UK since 1 May	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x		x			x
3	CBI president attacks EU over-regulation and lack of competitiveness			x	x	x	x	x										
4	EU deal with Iran on nuclear programme may stop US action against Iran at UN		x		x	x	x	x							x			
5	TUC survey: new EU migrants go to rural UK areas				x	x	x	x				x		x	x			
6	ECB president Trichet concerned about Euro's rise against US dollar			x	x		x	x				x						
7	ECJ ruling on right to use sports information by bookies may bankrupt British Horseracing Board			x		x	x	x										
8	European Court hearing on French student's claim for UK maintenance grant	x	x	x	x										x			
7-13 Nov 2004		Su	Mi	Ml	Ti	Tl	FT	Gd	6	10	NN	Tod	1800	R5L	Onl	Sky	ITV	C4N
WEEK TWO		Newspapers							BBC							Non-BBC		

[Su:Sun/News of the World; Mi: Mirror/Sunday Mirror; Ml: Daily Mail/Mail on Sunday; Ti: Times/Sunday Times; Tl: Daily Telegraph/Sunday Telegraph; FT: Financial Times; Gd: Guardian/Observer; Onl: bbc.co.uk/news]

(In addition to the six BBC stories included above, the BBC Week Two sample also included a Newsnight report on English apple growers, which considered the effect of EU farming subsidies. This story was not covered in that week's papers - but had been previously. The Newsnight report is considered in some detail later in this study.)

The chart below shows some (by no means all) of the stories covered by the press that were not reflected in our BBC broadcast sample (although some were covered by bbc.co.uk/news - these stories are asterisked):

Week 1	Week 2
<i>EC: European Commission; ECJ: European Court of Justice; ECHR: European Court of Human Rights</i>	
Eight European airlines complain to EC about Italian state aid for Alitalia	EU deal with Iran on nuclear programme may stop US action against Iran at UN*
Chemical industry complains over planned extension of EU regulation of chemical industry	ECJ ruling on right to use racecard information by bookmakers may bankrupt British Horseracing Board
EC directive to ban sex discrimination in insurance abandoned*	Microsoft settles some disputes in apparent attempt to weaken EC antitrust case*
EC sets out new corporate governance guidelines including full disclosure by EU businesses of executive pay deals	ECJ to rule on British steelworkers' pensions case
EU Commissioner-elect Buttiglione says homosexuality is a sin	Economics ministers of Italy and Germany express concern over rise in Euro
EC publishes list of worst EU industrial polluters	EC says weak dollar is raising oil prices
EU governments water down plan for EU sanctions on Burma*	International Olympics Committee says EU rules hinder Olympic bids
EU Commissioner-elect McCreevey calls for less EU regulation	EU and Japan announce trade sanctions on US imports
UK renews attack on planned EC directive giving temps same rights as permanent workers	UK may support change in EU arms embargo on China
EC restarts investigation of \$7.7bn Oracle takeover of PeopleSoft	EU, Russia and China to agree nuclear fusion project*
EC wants to restrict national governments' rights to block cross-border mergers for political reasons	International Energy Agency wants Russia to join EU emissions trading scheme
ECJ ends French banks' ban on paying current account interest	Council of Europe criticises UK anti-terror laws
US puts pressure on EU to maintain arms embargo on China as some EU leaders lobby to lift it	EC plans ban on charging different prices for different services across EU
EC wants power to confiscate airport landing slots from airlines and auction them to increase competition	Germany presses for own seat on UN Security Council, not common EU seat
EC to launch legal challenge to German law protecting VW from takeover	New moves in EU trade dispute with US and Canada over ban on importing beef fed with growth hormones
New EU rules on disposal of old cars blamed for big rise in car dumping in UK	EC wants Italy to lift ban on non-Italian tour guides
British Airways attacks possible EC proposal to impose tax on jet fuel	CBI criticises EC for allowing France to rescue Alstom engineering group
EU unemployment was 9% in August - up from 8.9% a year ago	Anger over new EU regulations on electricians
ECJ to rule on attempt by UK mobile phone operators to claim back £3.5bn VAT	Spanish PM's remarks on common EU defence policy cause controversy
ECJ rules against EC bid to force Greece to tax ouzo as heavily as gin and vodka	Consensus growing for changes in EU stability pact

* Stories covered by bbc.co.uk/news

It may seem surprising that some of these stories were not reported by the BBC outlets sampled, particularly as some (the comments from Mr Buttiglione for example) developed into very widely reported stories over the ensuing period.

But it does not seem possible to make a case that these stories were excluded because they lent support to a particular view of the EU - either Europhile or Eurosceptic. In most cases it is impossible to categorise these stories in those terms.

However, the question does arise as to whether the BBC by concentrating on a narrow selection of the available stories, may tend to underplay the sheer pervasiveness of EU activity.

The questions that arise are:

- ***Did the BBC present a reasonably representative range of the EU stories available in this period?***
- ***Did the BBC's choice of stories give a fair and rounded picture of the scope of EU activities during this period?***

5.2: Four case studies

Of the dozen EU stories covered by our BBC sample during this period, we looked in detail at four:

- Peter Mandelson's hearing as EU Trade Commissioner elect
- Home Office figures on EU migrants from EU accession states
- The European Commission report on the accession of Turkey
- A Newsnight report on the effects of EU farm subsidies on English apple orchards

The first three were chosen because they were widely reported, both by the BBC and by the other providers sampled, and this allowed us to make detailed comparisons.

The Newsnight report was selected because it raises a particular set of questions in connection with impartiality.

5.4.i: Peter Mandelson and the UK rebate

Range of information covered

The confirmation hearing of Peter Mandelson as EU Trade Commissioner-elect drew a great deal of attention from the news media. Every BBC outlet in our sample covered it (either previewing it, or summarising the event). It was also covered by two of the three non-BBC broadcasters sampled, and by all but one of the newspapers sampled.

The coverage varied greatly in the range of information given. However, there was a core of information that most providers included. The BBC coverage incorporated most of this core information - but with one potentially significant exception. It did not include Mr Mandelson's reluctance to be drawn on whether or not he would defend the £3bn UK rebate.

In response to a question about this from a British Conservative MEP, Robert Sturdy, Mr Mandelson had said:

"My view is that this issue must be resolved. The rebate seems fair, very fair to the UK and the Commission has made some interesting proposals that would reduce the rebate. I hope you will not mind if I reserve my position on this matter, and I'm sure the British Government will make a strong case."

This was but one answer to one question in a three-hour hearing. However, the question of the UK rebate is of particular salience to Eurosceptics, and his response was given great prominence by the most strongly Eurosceptic newspapers in our sample. For example, it was the sole aspect of the hearing that the Sun gave space to in its three-paragraph report:

Mandy EU 'Betrayal'

Peter Mandelson yesterday refused to condemn a plan to end Britain's Pounds 3bn-a-year EU rebate.

Quizzed by MEPs, the new EU Commissioner said he "reserved judgment on the matter".

Anti-EU campaigner Neil O'Brien said: "Mandelson is betraying Britain within weeks of getting to Brussels."

The Daily Mail, while covering many other aspects of the hearing, ran a separate story under the headline

Artful rebate dodger

With all the diplomatic skills of the consummate politician, Mr Mandelson distanced himself from Commission moves to phase out

London's near Pounds 3billion rebate from EU coffers leaving Britain's Conservatives fuming over his noncommittal answers.

He said he 'reserved his position', noting that the proposal by the outgoing Commission which would more than halve London's payback would make Britain 'one of the largest if not the largest' contributor.

'I'm sure the British Government will make a very convincing case when the time comes,' he said to laughter.

Jonathan Evans, leader of the Conservatives in the assembly, shot off a statement even before the hearing was over, charging Mr Mandelson with missing a perfect opportunity 'to demonstrate his willingness to stand up for British interests'.

None of the other newspapers gave the rebate issue equivalent prominence. However, all but one of the titles that covered the hearing did include it - a sentence somewhere in the middle third of the coverage.

The Master of Spin was evasive at times, declining to say whether he would support commission plans to strip Britain of its annual rebate. (DTel)

He sidestepped questions about whether he would fight to defend the UK's infamous budget rebate. (FT)

[He gave] only a half-hearted commitment to defending Britain's budget rebate. (Times)

The only newspaper sampled that covered the hearing but did not include the rebate issue was the Guardian.

Sky's Live at Five did not report the hearing, but both ITV and C4N did - and both mentioned the rebate. As with the newspapers, there was a sentence somewhere about the middle third of the story:

He wouldn't be drawn on whether he'd defend Britain's rebate. (ITV)

Mandelson was reluctant to say he'd defend the UK's rebate. (C4N)

Of our BBC sample, only the lunchtime and later outlets might have been expected to include this information (the hearing began at midday). But neither the R4 1800, nor the Six, nor the Ten, nor Newsnight, nor bbc.co.uk/news did so.

In order to ensure that this did not reflect some fault with our sample, we then looked at all the coverage of the hearing that day on BBC R4 and R5L, and we also checked the lunchtime TV news on BBC1.

We could find no mention of the rebate on R5L's coverage, or in the coverage on the BBC1 lunchtime news. It did, however, make a single appearance on BBC R4.

R4's PM Programme carried an interview with Robert Sturdy, the MEP whose question had prompted Mr Mandelson's response. Asked about his concerns arising from the hearing, Mr Sturdy put the rebate issue at the head of his list:

Well on the rebate I was deeply concerned that he wouldn't answer the question. He was very vague about it - and that's £2.75bn.

Although this statement was made on the BBC, it was never subsequently adopted by the BBC as part of its own reporting of the hearing. The BBC clearly knew about it, since it had carried Mr Sturdy's comment (and the leader of the Conservative MEPs, Jonathan Evans, issued a press release that day criticising Mr Mandelson on this issue). But it chose not to include any reference to this statement of the Conservatives' central concern in any of the many summaries of the hearing that appeared on R4, R5L, BBC One, BBC Two and bbc.co.uk/news that day.

Range of voices/opinions

The BBC outlets sampled ran interviews or interview clips from:

- Peter Mandelson(Lab)
- Saj Karim (LibDem MEP)
- Caroline Lucas (Green MEP)
- Robert Sturdy (Con MEP)
- Nigel Farage (UKIP MEP)

This was a reasonable selection of views from across the spectrum. (A number of newspapers made a point of seeking out comments from non-British MEPs. Should the BBC have done this too?)

C4N carried clips of Peter Mandelson and Nigel Farage and reported the views of trade justice campaigners. ITV carried clips of Peter Mandelson, Nigel Farage and Saj Karim.

Background and context supplied

The hearing provided an opportunity for the BBC to provide useful background and context of an EU institution and its powers, and we analysed the material to see to what extent the BBC had taken up this opportunity.

For example, we looked for material that explained what a Trade Commissioner does, what would be on the new Commissioner's agenda, and so on.

Given the extent of the press coverage, there was remarkably little attempt by the newspapers sampled to explain what a trade commissioner does and what powers he wields. What attempts there were, were often oblique:

Trade...is one of the areas where the commission...has far more power than the EU's member states.(Guardian)

Mr Mandelson will be at the heart of a liberal European Commission...with a brief that puts him at the heart of the EU's economic reform programme. (FT)

As trade commissioner, Mr Mandelson will be the chief negotiator for the world's biggest trading-bloc with far-reaching influence over the shape of the global economy. (Daily Telegraph)

Tim Franks for BBC Radio, did better than this:

The European Trade Commissioner has a hugely powerful job. It's he who negotiates multi-billion pound deals with other trading blocs; who fights cases at the court of international trade, the WTO; and who will be central in determining whether the world trade talks can be rescued. (R4 1800 - similar material from Franks was also used on R5L bulletins and used as the basis for a background piece on bbc.co.uk/news.)

R5L also addressed the question of the nature of Mr Mandelson's job head on. In its mid-morning show, the presenter (Julian Worricker) interviewed Jacki Davis, the editor of a Brussels-based magazine about the EU. His first question was admirably to the point:

Jacki tell us what the job involves. First of all what does a trade commissioner actually do?

Davis:

Well, first of all, what does a commissioner do? The European Commission is in one sense like any civil service in the world. It administers the EU business, it runs its day to day business, it's responsible for implementing EU legislation and each commissioner runs his or her own department.

In another sense it's completely unlike any other civil service because it actually has the right to propose legislation which gives it a political role. That's something that no other civil service as far as I know has.

What does a trade commissioner do? He's one of the most powerful because he can't just propose things, he actually goes and negotiates with the EU's trading partners. He does so under instructions from government. They have to approve the results of his negotiations. But he has some real clout in that sense. And he'll probably spend a lot of his time outside Brussels, not here at all, travelling round the world, talking to our key trading partners.

By comparison with this, the BBC TV coverage was much weaker. Neither the Six, Ten or Newsnight gave any explanation of the trade commissioner's powers beyond saying it was "one of the biggest jobs in the EU."

The Ten did run an explanatory package on the role of the EU Commission as a whole. This was a praiseworthy attempt to provide context. But it did not do much to explain to viewers the particular responsibilities of a trade commissioner.

Looking at the BBC's broadcast competitors, neither C4N nor ITV carried any explanation of a trade commissioner's powers in the output sampled.

We also looked for descriptions of Mr Mandelson's Trade in-tray and some indication as to how he would approach these issues.

On the issue of general approach the newspaper painted broadly the same picture as did the BBC.

The press presented Mr Mandelson as "vowing to fight for an end to the trade barriers that hurt poor countries" (DTel); but who "sought to soften his image as a free-trade zealot" (DTel); who was a "known proponent of CAP reform" (Gdn); but who wanted to "reassure the French government that he is no 'ultra-liberal' out to destroy the Common Agricultural Policy" (Obs).

On BBC TV, the Six and Ten made a general reference to Mr Mandelson's desire for: "an open global trading system, freed from protectionism in the interests of rich and poor." On Radio Mr Mandelson was described as "believing that free trade can liberate those in poverty" (Today) and as wanting to "challenge barriers and subsidies which impoverish the developing world." (Today)

As to the Mandelson in-tray, as the chart below shows, BBC outlets varied greatly in the amount of detail they gave. TV gave the least detail.

Peter Mandelson's In-Tray	BBC			Non-BBC	
	TV	Rad	Onl	ITV	C4N
World Trade Talks (the "Doha Round")		x	x		
Lowering trade barriers	x	x	x		
Help for the developing world		x	x		x
Reform of the Common Agricultural Policy			x		x
Dispute with the US over farm subsidies					
Dispute with the US over aircraft subsidies	x	x			x
Dispute with the US over GM foods		x	x		
Reform of the World Trade Organisation					
Negotiations with Mercosur [S American customs union]					
Raising European competitiveness			x		

[Onl: bbc.co.uk/news]

Looking at the BBC broadcast competitors: our ITV sample contained no information on the Mandelson in-tray or on his approach to dealing with it; C4N gave a substantial amount of information on the issue of CAP reform and its effect on developing countries; C4N also identified the aircraft subsidy dispute as a key issue for Mr Mandelson. Sky's Live at Five did not cover the hearings.

Accessibility

On the question of clarity, we found that BBC Radio took more care to explain possibly unfamiliar terms than did BBC Television. Would all viewers understand “protectionism” without a gloss, or the meaning of the phrase “economically liberal”?

Questions the panel might like to consider:

- ***How significant was the exclusion of the information about Mr Mandelson and the UK rebate?***
- ***Does the fact that the only other provider to exclude this information was the (strongly Europhile) Guardian indicate that, on this issue, BBC news values were aligned with those of the Guardian?***
- ***Should the BBC, particularly BBC TV, have done more to provide context and background?***

5.4.ii: Newsnight: Decline of the English apple

On 9 November 2004 Newsnight carried a filmed report attacking the EU for the decline of the English apple. The thesis of the report was that a change in EU policy was about to lay waste many English apple orchards. In the words of the reporter:

There's a new system for farm subsidies on the way, and it doesn't do the commercial orchards any favours...On 1 January the European subsidy system changes. Unless your land is classified as agricultural by then, it will never again under the new system be eligible for grants. And while some of the older orchards might qualify, commercial ones, bizarrely, don't count as agriculture.

Four apple growers were interviewed, all of whom supported the reporter's thesis. They cited two reasons for their decline: supermarket buying policy, and the new EU rules. A supermarket fruit buyer was interviewed and given a reasonable opportunity to rebut the criticism aimed at supermarkets. However, no-one was interviewed in the film to answer the criticism of the EU.

These criticisms were typified by the remarks of Mr Julian Temperley, a West Country cider-maker, interviewed in his orchard:

For orchards it's going to be a disaster. It's going to be a countryside, a wildlife, an environmental disaster. Orchards like this are going to be reclassified outside the English agricultural envelope. They are going to be classified along with car parks, airports and railway sidings. The financial incentive to cut the orchards down by 1 January...is going to be huge. Somerset is going to lose a lot of orchards.

These assertions went unchallenged within the film - and there was no indication within the film that any attempt had been made to obtain such an interview.

When the film finished, however, the presenter read a statement from Defra (The Department for the Environment, Fisheries and Food):

Commercial orchards have never received a direct Common Agricultural Policy subsidy in the UK or anywhere else in the EU.....that will not change under the new system.

For traditional old orchards, which have high amenity value, payments have been available under our Countryside Stewardship Scheme for enhancing and restoring them and for allowing public access where appropriate. Growers will be able to apply for similar options under a new scheme when it is launched next year.

This statement seemed to throw some of the assertions confidently made in the film into considerable doubt. But the questions raised went unanswered. Newsnight moved on to another topic.

Further research into the background to this report raises questions about the quality of journalism in this report and its impartiality.

First, it contained no reference to the fact that, a week before the report was transmitted, Defra had announced a significant change in policy to meet the concerns of campaigners on this issue. In a press release, dated 2 November 2004, Defra said:

Existing guidance from the European Commission does allow land in dual use, such as traditional grazed orchards, to be used to claim subsidy... Our intention...is that such traditional orchards with the potential for dual use will in future be eligible for payment...

This announcement received a very positive response from campaigners for English apple growers. The Western Daily Press, which had campaigned vigorously on this issue (and is available to all BBC journalists via the NEON newspaper data base) reported the Defra announcement thus:

Cidermakers are applauding Defra scientists for coming up with a "brilliant" rescue plan for traditional West Country orchards. Under newly-published proposals their owners will be able to claim the all-important single farm payment from January.

The move has now averted the threat of hundreds of acres of old orchards being chainsawed.

One campaigner, Mr Julian Temperley (the same Mr Temperley who had appeared in the Newsnight film) was reported as saying:

This is really excellent news... This is a defining moment. All that really remains now is to cross the t's and dot the i's; but we are looking at a victory for the traditional landscapes of the West Country. (Western Daily Press 9 November 2004)

This is a very different view from the one Mr Temperley expressed in the Newsnight film. What seems to have happened is that Mr Temperley was interviewed for Newsnight some time before the change in policy, and Newsnight had failed to check that his views had not subsequently changed.

The second set of questions concern the way the report was positioned. This was not a normal Newsnight report. The reporter, George Monbiot, is not a member of the BBC staff. He is a writer who uses his column in the Guardian to campaign vigorously on environmental and anti-globalisation issues. A print version of the Newsnight film appeared in the Guardian weekend magazine on 30 October 2004. His Newsnight report was, in short, not a piece of impartial reporting, but a personal view.

The BBC has clear guidelines on “personal view” programmes.

...personal view programmes which deal with matters of public policy, or of political or industrial controversy entail special obligations:

- *The nature of a personal view programme should be signalled clearly to audiences in advance*
- *Editors should ensure that these programmes do not seriously misrepresent opposing viewpoints. There should be proper respect for factual accuracy.*
- *It may be appropriate to provide an opportunity to respond to a programme, for example in a right to reply programme or in a pre-arranged discussion programme.*

(BBC Producers’ Guidelines)

Did Newsnight put sufficient effort into “signalling clearly in advance” that this was a personal view report? Or was its introduction to the item constructed in such a way that, to the casual viewer, it might have appeared that the BBC had adopted Mr Monbiot’s views as its own?

The presenter read the following introduction:

There is nothing more English you might think than the English apple. But now it turns out that the fruit is an endangered species. It's being pushed off the supermarket shelves by cheap imports and new foreign varieties. In the past 50 years, more than three quarters of the country's apple orchards have gone. And now apple growers are facing a new threat. When the single farm payment is introduced in January to replace current subsidies, commercial orchards will be excluded from the scheme. Some farmers are planning to cut their trees down so they'll get the money instead. The environmentalist and campaigner, George Monbiot, reports now on the decline and fall of the English apple.

Questions the panel may wish to consider:

- **Did this report adhere to BBC guidelines? In particular:**
 - **Was the “personal view” nature of the film signalled sufficiently clearly?**
 - **Was the EU and Defra point of view fairly represented?**
 - **Was there proper respect for factual accuracy?**
 - **Was Defra given sufficient opportunity to rebut the case made against it?**

5.4.iii: Immigration from new EU members in eastern Europe

On November 10 2004 the Home Office released statistics on migrants from the eastern European states that joined the EU on 1 May 2004. The announcement was reported by all the newspapers in our sample except the Mirror, by all four of the evening outlets in our BBC sample and by bbc.co.uk/news, and by C4N.

The announcement was controversial. The figures were much higher than had been forecast by the government - and the announcement came at a time when the Conservative Party has made tightening controls on immigration one its key policies.

There were striking similarities between BBC and press coverage, both in broad structure and in detail (Newsnight and the FT, for example, both used the same bus company in Bath to illustrate the issue).

However, there was less common ground in reporting reaction to the announcement.

The chart below sets out the aspects of this story included by those providers in our sample who covered the announcement:

Immigration from new EU states	Newspapers						BBC					C4N
	FT	TI	Gd	Ti	MI	Su	NN	1800	Six	Ten	Onl	
91,000 have registered in 5 months since 1 May	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x
91,000 workers represent 0.3% of UK work force	x			x			x					
120,000 could arrive each year					x							
Figures were much higher than government forecasts	x	x	x		x	x	x	x				x
Figures were much higher than some newspapers had forecast					x		x					
Registration scheme was set up to discourage migrants from working in the black market		x						x			x	
Registration scheme gives migrants some welfare benefits					x							
Number claiming benefit are low				x			x	x		x	x	
Hundreds have tried to claim benefits					x							
Most new EU migrants are Polish				x			x	x			x	x
Most new EU migrants work in hospitality, business or agriculture								x		x		
Government: policy is a success	x	x					x	x		x		
Government: policy gives UK advantage over other EU countries	x	x	x	x	x						x	
Government: UK needs migrants to fill vacancies	x	x	x	x		x	x			x	x	
Government: migrants have contributed significantly to UK economy	x	x	x	x	x				x	x		
Government: migrants paid significant amounts of tax			x	x	x	x	x	x				
Government: policy encouraged migrants to work legally								x			x	x
Government: 45% of those registering were already in UK before 1 May - had now legalised their status	x	x	x		x	x					x	x
Government: Other migrants had come for summer jobs and had now left			x								x	
Government: 1% population growth through migration adds 1.5% to GDP	x											
Government: no amnesty for illegal immigrants before identity card scheme in place					x							
Bank of England: migrants could be keeping inflation low	x											
Figures drew Conservative criticism: "a shambles"	x	x	x		x							
Conservatives: figures higher than predicted								x	x			

Immigration from new EU states	Newspapers						BBC					C4N
	FT	TI	Gd	Ti	MI	Su	NN	1800	Six	Ten	Onl	
Conservatives: many more working illegally than the 91,000 registered	x	x	x		x	x			x	x		
Some migrants say 50% of other migrants are not registered							x					
Most EU countries, but not UK, restricted new EU members' right to work until 2011	x	x										
Migrationwatch UK: wants cuts in work permits for non-EU countries	x	x			x							
Migrationwatch UK: Migrants do add to economy, but this is outweighed by added strain on infrastructure							x	x				
Pressure groups say UK should limit not expand numbers coming into UK										x		
IPPR:further tightening of rules could damage business	x											
IPPR: migrants make big contribution to UK economy							x					
Structural UK factors - growing skills and ageing population - make some jobs hard to fill							x					
Many Bath firms find it hard to recruit locally							x					
First Group uses Polish drivers in Bath	x						x					
British Hospitality Association: employers targeting Poland, Hungary, Lithuania				x								
British Hospitality Association: People on benefit in UK want to keep their benefits - so work fewer hours than migrants				x								
Employment agency in Prague: 40% of UK demand is transport; 40% industrial; 10% construction	x											
Drive to recruit foreign workers sidesteps anti-discrimination laws				x								
Concordia (youth organisation): low investment in agricultural colleges in UK has caused skill shortage				x								
Migrants send money home					x					x		
Migrants earn much more in UK than at home							x		x			
Over time, the wage gap between new EU states and UK will lessen									x			
Hungarian President supports migration							x					
Some migrants will return home									x	x		
Some migrants will stay in UK:53% have permanent jobs									x	x		

As the chart demonstrates, some points of detail were different. For example, some newspapers gave more detail than the BBC about policy differences between the UK and other EU countries on employment rights for migrants from the new accession states. On the other hand, Newsnight gave detail about the demographics of the UK that no newspaper reported.

Range of opinion/voices

On the range of opinion reported: the government view was fairly represented by the BBC outlets.

Newsnight and the R4 1800 carried interviews with Migrationwatch UK, a prominent anti-immigration pressure group, and its general concerns were touched on in the Ten.

The Conservative view was reported by the Six and Ten, but not by the R4 1800, Newsnight, or bbc.co.uk/news (which carried no comment other than statements by the Home Secretary).

Some press concerns were not reflected by the BBC:

- The Times used the EU migrant figures as part of a larger story about immigrant labour which gave prominence to views not reflected by the BBC - for example, to the view that the UK's labour shortage, and hence the need for migrant labour, was increased by the relative generosity of the UK's benefit system.
- The Mail gave the story a sharply anti-government presentation. It gave great prominence to the failure of the government's original forecasts. Uniquely among our press sample it reported that the Home Secretary had "hinted that there could be an amnesty for illegal immigrants from outside the EU". And it also presented the information about benefit claims in a way disadvantageous to the Government:

"Figures show that hundreds of Eastern European workers have tried to claim benefits since arriving. More than 1,000 had applied for child benefits with over half successful." (Mail)

Compare this with:

"...the number claiming benefit was very small." (Times)

And with the BBC:

"Of the 90950 who registered...only a fraction applied for benefits." (R4 1800)

"Fewer than 500 have applied for benefits." (Ten)

"Contrary to tabloid fears, few have tried to claim benefit. Admittedly, though, strict rules prevent it." (Newsnight)

Questions the panel may care to consider:

- ***Do the differences between the BBC presentation of this topic and that of some newspapers support or detract from the BBC's claim to impartiality?***
- ***Was there sufficient reporting of Conservative reaction to the Home Secretary's announcement by all the BBC outlets sampled?***

5.4.iv: Accession of Turkey

The European Commission report on the accession of Turkey drew wide media attention. It was covered by all our BBC sample, by most of the press sample and by C4N.

There was broad agreement between the BBC coverage and that of other providers - see the chart below:

Turkish accession report Points covered in press reporting	BBC		
	TV	Rad	Onl
The Report			
Opens way to membership talks with the EU	x	x	x
But imposes conditions:	x	x	x
Further progress on democracy	x	x	x
Further progress on human rights	x	x	x
Further progress on rule of law			
Talks can be suspended if progress not made	x	x	x
Curbs, possibly permanent, on migration (this is unique to Turkey in the EU)	x		x
Talks could start 2005, accession unlikely before 2015	x	x	x
"Open-ended" talks with no guarantee that Turkey could join in the end	x	x	x
Final EU decision on opening talk with Turkey in December 04	x	x	x
Turkey			
70m people	x	x	x
Mainly Muslim	x	x	x
Poor, with large rural minority and high unemployment	x	x	x
Member of Nato	x		x
Member of Council of Europe			
Democracy	x		x
Has made big changes to meet EU norms	x	x	x
Death penalty abolished			x
Torture less widespread			x
Freedom of press safeguarded			x
Situation of Kurds improved	x		x
Ankara has put pressure on Turkish Cypriots to approve UN peace plan			
National Security Council now headed by civilian, not soldier			
But problems remain:	x	x	x
Torture and human rights abuses	x	x	x
Honour killings		x	x
Child labour	x		x
Military still play big role			x
Kurds do not have equal rights	x		x
Non-Muslims experience problems practising their religion			x
Press still not wholly free			x

Turkish accession report Points covered in press reporting	BBC		
	TV	Rad	Onl
Issues			
Potential problems from:			
Clash of Muslim/Christian religion	x	x	x
Clash of European/Asian culture and value systems	x	x	x
Need for large subsidies		x	x
Migration and possible effect on EU employment			x
Turkey's commanding voice in EU as biggest member state	x		
But: Turkey's potential role as EU bridge to Muslim world	x		x
Pushing EU border so far East brings problems:			x
border management/illegal immigration/asylum			x
EU would border unstable states (Syria, Iraq, Iran etc)			x
police co-operation			
Migration controls run counter to EU free movement of labour			
Turkish poor vulnerable when exposed to single market			
EU enlargement brings strains on processes and institutions		x	
(Some think this is good, some bad)		x	
Reaction in EU			
Public opinion across EU opposed to Turkish entry		x	
Strong support for accession from British government		x	
Britain will oppose migration curbs			
Concern in France, Germany, Netherlands, Austria	x	x	x
France to hold referendum on Turkish accession	x	x	x
SPD in Germany may split on issue			
Cyprus wants further progress on recognition			x
Reaction in Turkey			
Turkish government welcomed the report	x		
Turkish government concern over "Special conditions for Turkey"	x	x	x
Turkish media generally upbeat		x	x
"Why can't we join immediately? It's because we're Muslims"(vox pop)			
Turkish PM Erdogan attacked French referendum as "double standards"			

Background and context supplied

We looked for information about Turkey's size, economic situation, ethnic makeup etc, and material that gave detail on the contents of the European Commission report. As the chart demonstrates, the BBC coverage gave a lesser degree of detail overall than the press, but included the most significant aspects in its coverage.

Range of voice/opinions

Although the possible accession of Turkey is relatively uncontroversial in the UK, it is highly controversial in some other parts of the EU and the BBC reflected this. Newsnight's report from Paris on French attitudes included a

range of voices, both pro and anti. The R4 1800 carried an interview with Alain Lamassoure MEP, a leading French opponent. Today carried a report from Berlin reflecting German opposition.

The decision of the Commission to recommend conditions on Turkey's progress to accession caused some anger within Turkey, and this was represented in the BBC coverage. Today interviewed a former Turkish foreign minister and Newsnight a former prime minister.

This coverage does not seem to raise significant issues in the context of this study. It is a good example of the BBC's ability to present complex and unfamiliar material in a balanced and accessible way for a wide range of audiences.