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# News Pluralism and Public Media in Spain. Televisión Española’s regression following a change of government (2012-2013)

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## Abstract

[EN] **Introduction:** This article describes and analyses the policies applicable to Spain’s national public broadcaster’s governance model that were adopted in November 2011, when the conservative party *Partido Popular* (PP) came to power. The specific reforms and their implications for the News Services of *Televisión Española* (Spanish Television, TVE) are examined, beside the consequences for the information and the level of pluralism. **Methodology:** It has conducted a content analysis of two samples from three weeks of the first quarter of 2012 and 2013 (1294 news). **Results and conclusions:** It was found that the regovernmentalisation of the management bodies of the *Corporación de Radio y Televisión Española* (Spanish Broadcasting Corporation, RTVE) had increased TVE’s content banalisation to the detriment of major current affairs issues; fewer points of view and sources were observed in the coverage of labour-related news. Besides this regovernmentalisation, interpretative journalism tended to prevail over descriptive journalism, with an increase in the positive tone of economy-related news.

## Keywords

Spain; news pluralism; public television; broadcasting policy; content analysis; political parallelism.

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2011). 3.2. A new governance model and a new news policy in RTVE (2011-2013). 3.3. Content analysis results Content analysis results. 4. Discussion and conclusion. 5. References 6. Notes.

Traslate by **Steve Norris** (Member of the Institute of Translation & Interpreting in the United Kingdom)

## 1. Introduction

International organisations with communication policy competencies (Council of Europe, European Parliament and UNESCO, to name but a few) and scholars commonly acknowledge that the existence of independent, properly funded public media undoubtedly contributes to the generation of a pluralistic media offering, which in turn is essential for ensuring democratic debate.

The two recommendations relating to public broadcasting recently made in the report entitled *A free and pluralistic media to sustain European democracy*, commissioned by the European Commission and produced by the High Level Group on Media Freedom and Pluralism (Viñe-Freiberga et al. 2013), serve as a synthesis of all the literature generated on this topic:

Recommendation 26: There should be a provision of state funding for media which are essential for pluralism (including geographical, linguistic, cultural and political pluralism), but are not commercially viable. The state should intervene whenever there is a market failure leading to the under-provision of pluralism, which may be considered as a key public good.

Recommendation 27: Any public ownership of the media should be subject to strict rules prohibiting governmental interference, guaranteeing internal pluralism and placed under the supervision of an independent body representing all stakeholders.

In short, public media are considered important agents of external pluralism (coexisting alongside community and commercial media) but, to enable them to really play that role, their distinguishing feature has to be authentic internal pluralism, which, according to Rafael Díaz Arias (2012, 140-147), manifests itself in four dimensions: internal managerial pluralism, internal social pluralism (right of access, implicit or explicit), internal pluralism of messages, and internal professional pluralism.

However, the degree of development of these forms of internal pluralism cannot be disassociated from the mediatic and socio-political environments in which the media operate. In this respect, the high levels of governmental interference and the low levels of professionalisation that are characteristic of the polarised pluralist media systems typically found in Mediterranean Europe (Hallin and Mancini 2004) are especially worrying. Equally troubling is the high degree of political clientelism observed in these societies, which, among other factors, can be put down to many centuries of Feudalism, the success of the Catholic Counter-Reformation or late democratisation (Hallin and Papathanassopoulos 2002).

In this work, we have concentrated on internal pluralism of messages and, more precisely, on news content pluralism because of its special impact on the processes of shaping public opinion.

In particular, we have analysed the case of Spain's national public broadcaster, *Televisión Española* (Spanish Television, TVE), starting with the premise that news pluralism in this medium has become considerably weaker since a change of government in November 2011. Since then, the conservative party *Partido Popular* (PP) –governing with an absolute majority– has pushed through a highly contested reform of policies affecting public media in general and, as discussed further below, the *Corporación de Radio y Televisión Española* (Spanish Broadcasting Corporation, RTVE) in particular. It should be noted that an earlier study on the 2012 level of pluralism in Spanish generalist television broadcasters' news content (before the reforms promulgated by the new conservative Government) showed that TVE was, at that time, the television network with the highest level of internal pluralism of content, whereas commercial television networks stood out for their contribution to external pluralism (Humanes, Montero, de Dios and López-Berini 2013).

Studying the Spanish case is especially relevant because the legislation governing RTVE since Spain's transition towards democracy was radically modified in 2006, during the social-democratic Executive's first term of office with Rodríguez Zapatero as Prime Minister. Based on the recommendations made by a panel of experts with markedly academic and philosophical backgrounds, the 2006 reform gave rise to a period in which TVE's News Services enjoyed clear audience share leadership, received important international accolades and obtained very positive reviews from scholars (Blasco Gil, 2011, Lamuedra Graván, 2012). It was an unprecedented shift, particularly when considering that it occurred in the context of a media system like Spain's, which fits perfectly with the characteristics of the polarised pluralist models described by Hallin and Mancini.

This work is also of interest because, in the current context, a pluralistic news offering from TVE is all the more necessary in light of the complex socioeconomic and political situation that Spain is experiencing, and of the fact that the two big communication groups (Mediaset and Planeta de Agostini) have a 60% share of the digital terrestrial television (DTT) audience and an 80% slice of the advertising cake in this market (although it should be noted that the two groups manage channels with distinct ideological profiles).

## 2. Methodology

In order to verify whether or not the broadcasting policies applicable to RTVE after Spain's change of government in 2011 have had an impact on TVE's news pluralism, we performed a content analysis on two samples taken on dates before and after the 2006 Act reform, which was promulgated and applied in mid 2012. For the analysis, six one-week blocks were randomly selected: three from the first quarter of 2012 (23-29 January, 13-19 February and 5-11 March) and three from the first quarter of 2013 (21-27 January, 11-17 February and 4-10 March). A total of 1,294 analysis units were analysed (excluding sports and weather sections). In order to determine intercoder reliability, a random selection of 10% of the sample was recoded. Using Holsti's formula, an acceptable level of intercoder reliability was obtained (0.85).

Table 1 shows the basic characteristics of the samples analysed and the audience share of TVE's news at the time when the samples were taken. The codebook contained a total of 25 variables

divided into seven sections. Of these variables, the following were used in the analyses presented in this article:

(a) Issue selection. From news events, analysis units were classified into 14 issue categories (Government / Politics, Crime, Natural disasters / Accidents, Work / Unions, Business / Economy, Armed conflicts / Terrorism / Wars, Social problems, Health, Education, Culture, Science, Environment, Society and Others) in order to make comparisons between the two sample periods. This variable allowed us to measure whether any changes had taken place in the selection of newscast issues, which might have affected issue diversity. Napoli (1999, 8) considers that the three components on which media diversity is based are source, audience and content diversity. In this work, we have employed the definition of content diversity given by Tan and Weaver: “the issue categories that the newspaper reports on, which is also called media agenda diversity” (2013: 774). One of the reasons why TVE won the 2009 TV News Award for the best prime time evening newscast was precisely the variety of issues it had covered (Blasco Gil 2011: 78-80). Comparing the issue selections in the two sample years (2012 and 2013) was therefore considered fitting.

(b) Also in accordance with Napoli (1999), we have measured the “idea-viewpoint diversity” concept. In order to approach this concept, we used a dichotomous variable to measure the presence/absence of viewpoint diversity in a news item.

(c) Sources used. The number of different (explicitly identified) sources used in each news item was measured.

(d) Journalistic style-related indicators. These refer to a journalist’s stance on the action or agent covered in a news item. For Hallin and Mancini (2004), internal pluralism of messages is divided into two indicators: viewpoint diversity (considered in variable b) and the journalistic role played by professionals (oriented towards neutral information or commentary). Journalistic style has been broken down into three categories: descriptive (recounting what is happening), interpretative (analysing and assessing a situation while describing it), and critical (containing a journalist’s opinion) (McNair 2000; Strömbäck and Dimitrova 2006). In addition, interpretative and critical-style news items were coded according to the assessment (tone) that the medium makes of the main issue: positive, negative or neutral.

**Table 1. Basic characteristics of the samples and audience share**

	Audience share (March)	Length (mean seconds)	Format (%)				
			News	Report	Interview	Live voice-over	Opinion
2012	17.2	76.5”	40.5	14.3	1.1	44.1	0
2013	13.5	80.8”	49.7	23.1	0	27.2	0

N= 1,294		78.7”	45.3	18.8	0.6	35.4	0
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Before going on to detail the content analysis results, we shall describe and analyse the changes made by Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy’s conservative Government to RTVE’s governance model, citing some examples of how these have affected the News Services’ organisation chart and working dynamics. In order to do so, we must firstly summarise certain aspects of the 2006 reform that are especially relevant to the work in hand.

### 3. Findings

#### 3.1. Degovernmentalisation and the creation of news councils in the social-democratic period (2004-2011)

Although the policy applicable to RTVE that had been formulated by Prime Minister Rodríguez Zapatero’s social-democratic Governments (2004-2008 and 2008-2011) was criticised for a number of reasons (mainly the removal advertising from TVE) (Bustamante 2010; Zallo, 2010), there was broad agreement among scholars when it came to applauding some of the provisions of State-owned Radio and Television Act 17/2006. Some measures that they regarded as very positive were the reform of RTVE’s governance model and the creation of news councils for public radio and television (and for the website/interactive division), which respectively enabled progress to be made towards degovernmentalisation and towards ensuring that professionals had a greater say in the design of the news line of RTVE’s media (Blasco Gil, 2011; Fernández Alonso, 2008; Lamuedra Graván, 2012).

Regarding the governance model, the aforementioned Act provided for a system of parliamentary appointment, by a two-thirds majority in the Congress of Deputies, of the RTVE Chairperson for a six-year period. Thus, the appointment of RTVE’s top executive at least required the two major parliamentary groups (social democrats and PP conservatives) to reach an agreement. This effectively put an end to a practice that had been in force for more than a quarter of a century, whereby the Director-General was appointed directly by the Government for a period equal to its term of office. At the same time, Act 17/2006 set out that the majority trade unions in RTVE could nominate two of the 12 Board Members. The Board’s term of office was also extended from four to six years to ensure that the replacement of RTVE’s managerial posts did not occur at the same time as a change of government. The system for appointing the Board Members continued to be by a two-thirds majority in the parliamentary chambers, though the Board Members’ powers in relation to the Chairperson’s were strengthened.

Thus, RTVE’s governance model had evolved (in accordance with some, though not all, of the proposals made by the aforementioned panel of experts) from a governmental one to a parliamentary or proportional representation one. In other words, it had shifted from a governance model in which RTVE had been controlled by a political group supporting the Executive to another in which that control was shared by several political forces. However, it was still far from the professional and from the civic or corporatist models in which professionals or various social and political groups

respectively play an important role in the management of public service media (Humphreys, 1996: 155-158).

Regarding the creation of news councils in RTVE, Article 24.1 of Act 17/2006 stated that they were internal bodies in which RTVE's news professionals could participate to guarantee their independence and to ensure the objectivity and truthfulness of newscast content. They were set up on 15 July 2008, after the approval of the RTVE News Statute. Section IV of this Statute developed the provisions of aforementioned Article 24 of Act 17/2006, and gave news councils the significant function of informing the Board of any potential news manipulations or bad practices, and of any potential breaches of Act 17/2006 in relation to news-related matters, of the Basic Programming Principles approved by the Board, of the Framework Mandate or of the News Statute (Article 49 f).

The reform of the governance model and the creation of news councils (agreed by consensus among several parliamentary parties) were two key aspects of the political response given by Prime Minister Rodríguez Zapatero's first social-democratic Government (2004-2008) to the strong criticism levelled against RTVE's News Services, especially during the second term of office of Prime Minister Aznar's conservative Government (2000-2004). Among the reasons behind this criticism, of particular note was Decision 59/2003, of 23 July, handed down by the *Audiencia Nacional*, the Spanish court responsible for hearing significant cases, condemning RTVE for news manipulation in the coverage of the general strike of 20 June 2002. Several months earlier, in February 2003, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe had also highlighted TVE's coverage as an example of news manipulation due to political influence, and in March 2003 and February 2004, the medium's professionals set up the *Comité contra la Manipulación Informativa en TVE* (Committee Against News Manipulation in TVE), which issued 36 reports on this issue (Lakidain Zabalza and Patterson 2012, 103-104).

With these precedents, understandable concerns about broadcasting policy were raised when PP returned to power in late 2011 with an absolute majority, as had happened during Prime Minister Aznar's second Government

### **3.2. A new governance model and a new news policy in RTVE (2011-2013)**

The aspects of the aforementioned 2006 reform had a very positive impact on RTVE's newscast credibility, as demonstrated by the fact that all of its newscasts had regained audience share leadership by 2007, or that TVE had won the prestigious 2009 TV News Award for the best prime time evening newscast (the world's best newscast), in which, among other things, the variety of issues and sources stood out (Blasco Gil, 2011: 78-80).

Then, with TVE's first channel as the absolute audience share leader for the third consecutive year (with 14.5% of the share according to data provided by Barlovento Comunicación), came the aforementioned conservative shift in the Government of Spain.

In April 2012, just a few months after PP's election victory, the Spanish Council of Ministers approved Decree-Law 15/2012 on the modification of RTVE's administrative regime. Compared to Act 17/2006, the main new features of this Decree-Law were: a reduction in the number of Board Members from 12 to nine, getting rid of the two nominated by the trade unions; the abolishment of

fixed remuneration for all but the Chairperson, who clearly came out in a much stronger position as RTVE's top executive; and a modification in the way Board Members and the Chairperson were appointed. The last point is particularly significant because it implied that if a two-thirds majority was not reached in the first round of voting, then 24 hours later both the Board Members and the Chairperson could be appointed by absolute majority in the respective legislative chambers, a majority that, as we have already noted, PP has had since November 2011. In other words, it signalled a shift towards the regovernmentalisation of RTVE's governance model.

It should also be noted that the Decree-Law on whose provisions we have commented is a type of legislative procedure foreseen in the Spanish Constitution for extraordinary or urgent situations, which allows the Executive to modify Acts approved by the Legislature (although it does require parliamentary ratification). In the Government communiqué issued after the Council of Ministers approving the aforementioned Decree-Law, the justification given for the adoption of this exceptional action was the need to take urgent austerity measures in a context where the post of RTVE Chairperson had remained vacant following Alberto Oliart's resignation in summer 2011. Since that time, it had been impossible to reach the required consensus to appoint a new Chairperson under the provisions of Act 17/2006, something that had been relatively easy in the case of Oliart and his predecessor, the journalist Luis Fernández.

The counter-reform in question was ratified in May 2012 with the backing of the conservative Catalan nationalist alliance *Convergència i Unió* (CiU). A few months earlier, CiU, which did not have an absolute majority in the Catalan Parliament, had also promulgated a similar counter-reform in Catalonia, in this case thanks to the abstention of the Catalan conservative party *Partido Popular de Cataluña* (PPC) (Blasco Gil, 2013: 223).

Under the new legal framework described above, on 28 June 2012, the Congress of Deputies elected Leopoldo González-Echenique as the new RTVE Chairperson in the second round of voting, with votes in favour from PP and CiU. González-Echenique, who at that time held the post of General Secretary of the NH Hoteles group, lacked any experience in the broadcasting sector and had a clearly technical profile, as well as an obvious political affiliation. For example, during the period of Prime Minister Aznar's Governments, he had been the State Attorney in the Ministry of the Interior (1998), Deputy Director of Legal Services of the National Securities Market Commission (1998-1999), Director of the Technical Office of the Under-Secretary for Economic Affairs (2000-2002) and Director-General for the Development of the Information Society in the Ministry of Science and Technology (2002-2003).

It is particularly surprising to find that, on the same day as he took up his post, González-Echenique convened the Board to appoint, among other positions, a new person to take charge of TVE's News Services, when no action had yet been taken to appoint the new Director of TVE, who is supposedly the person who should dismiss the existing person in charge if there is reason to do so (Blasco Gil, 2013: 219). The new RTVE Chairperson therefore immediately got rid of Fran Llorente, under whose direction TVE's news had attained the aforementioned success, and appointed Julio Somoano as his successor. At that time, Somoano was in charge of the newscasts of Telemadrid, the Madrid-based public television broadcaster known for being unrelentingly condemned by a group of professionals involved in the *Salvemos Telemadrid* (Let's save Telemadrid) campaign launched in

2006 to denounce news manipulation in that medium (Fernández Alonso and Fernández Viso 2012, 130-133). Many comments were made about the fact that the new Director of TVE's News had been the author of a master's dissertation entitled *Estrategia de comunicación para el triunfo del Partido Popular en las próximas elecciones generales* (Communication strategy for the *Partido Popular's* victory in the next general elections), which he defended at the Autonomous University of Barcelona (UAB) in November 2005.

From that moment on, all the news editors were gradually replaced. Worthy of mention is that Cristina Almandós, the editor who replaced the distinguished Pepa Bueno at the helm of *Telediario 2* (a prime time evening newscast) after PP had come to power, was forced to resign following the criticism levelled against the coverage of the mass demonstration held in Catalonia on 11 September 2012 (the National Day of Catalonia): news about this event incomprehensibly appeared as the fifth item of the day, in a newscast that three years earlier had won the TV News Award. Especially contested was the dismissal in August 2012 of Ana Pastor, who had been the Director of the morning news magazine *Los desayunos de TVE*. In a tense interview in April 2011, Pastor had challenged the Secretary-General of PP, María Dolores de Cospedal, who had accused TVE of a lack of news objectivity. On leaving the programme, Pastor stated that she had been dismissed for doing journalism and because of a political decision (*El País*, 4 August 2012).

In this context, the high number of communiqués issued by TVE's News Council as from summer 2012 is very significant. One example is the communiqué entitled *Grave ataque a la libertad de información* (Serious attack on freedom of information), published on 23 November of the same year, in which the News Council highlighted that it had received numerous complaints and requests for protection of constitutional rights as a result of interference or coercion in TVE professionals' news-related work. The Council noted that the significance of the complaints had become particularly serious in relation to *Informe Semanal*, a renowned news programme broadcast on Saturday evenings for four decades, because several professionals had been warned or expelled from the programme after exercising their right to have their names removed from the credits of certain reports in which the Management had imposed its editorial line against the principles of the RTVE News Statute and Style Manual. In respect of this emblematic programme, the same News Council made a statement on 30 April 2013, in a communiqué on the report "*Acoso a políticos*" (Harassment of politicians), which covered citizen-led exposure protests, where demonstrators gather near politicians' homes. The communiqué pointed out that the report suffered from a clear bias when it came to giving the various parties involved a voice. Specifically, it stated that the position of 14 out of the 17 testimonies was clearly against this form of protest fostered by the *Plataforma Antideshucios* (Anti-Eviction Platform), and half of those who had criticised them were members of the Government or of PP. The Council expressed its concern over the infringement of a series of principles contained in the RTVE News Statute and Style Manual, and called upon those in charge of the programme to take steps to ensure a proper balance in testimonies given on controversial issues.

More recently, on 17 September 2013, the News Council demanded the resignation of TVE's News Services' Content Director, José Gilgado, because it considered that his conduct while producing the *Telediario 2* of 14 August 2013 infringed RTVE's editorial principles and seriously jeopardised TVE's independence and credibility, as well as the viewers' right to receive impartial, objective and truthful news. What motivated this statement was the fact that Gilgado had forced them to insert a

clarification in a news item, which subsequently proved false, in respect of the Secretary-General of PP's declaration before a judge in the context of a corruption case relating to the alleged illegal funding of PP (the Bárcenas case).

Along similar lines to such condemnation by TVE's News Council, the *Resolution on the state of media freedom in Europe* was adopted by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe on 24 January 2013, in which this body expressed its concern over the existence of "recent reports about political pressure on public service broadcasters in Hungary, Italy, Romania, Serbia, Spain and Ukraine". Thus, problems relating to governmental interference in national public broadcasting became apparent on an international scale, and these problems have been widely discussed in the Parliamentary Committee for RTVE Control (Congress of Deputies) and in the Spanish press.

In the latest *Informe sobre contenido de los telediarios en la última temporada* (Report on last season's newscast content), which TVE's News Council supplied to the authors in December 2013, there was continued condemnation of and warnings about certain journalistic practices that infringed upon professional independence and pluralism. Specifically, this report gave several examples (mostly referring to October 2013) of cases in which part of the information had been omitted, an event had been given simplified coverage, or aspects that were less positive for the Government had been avoided. A special section of the report was given over to what was considered to be a worrying banalisation of the news.

Finally, it is worth pointing out that TVE's audience share has suffered since the aforementioned changes. Indeed, according to the Barlovento Comunicación reports, which are based on Kantar Media data, the newscast audience fell from 18.6% in January 2012 to 12.7% in November 2013.

### 3.3. Content analysis results

Both the rise in the number of complaints about the journalistic coverage given to some events and the fall in audience share suggest that changes generally affecting TVE's news content have occurred, and that such changes are a consequence of the political reforms as described. This initial hypothesis is the basis of the following research questions:

RQ1: Did the change of news editors affect the selection of issues?

RQ2: Did the change of news editors affect the presence of viewpoint diversity in the news?

RQ3: Did the change of news editors affect news source diversity?

RQ4: Did the change of news editors affect the journalistic style and tone of news?

The first research question refers to a potential modification in the selection criteria of events and in the importance given to them. As already mentioned, the last report by TVE's News Council did in fact warn about news selection practices: the concealment of polemic issues that might prove awkward for the Government, and a higher presence of banal issues. Indeed, Table 2 shows statistically significant differences ( $X^2=29.847$ ,  $df=13$ ,  $p\leq 0.005$ ) in the percentage presence of issue diversity between the times considered. The analysis of adjusted standardised residuals further shows that these differences were concentrated in four issue categories. News about Government/Politics

decreased in 2013, as did news about Business/Economy. In contrast, the presence of news about Crime and Others was higher.

**Table 2. Issue selection (% and adjusted standardised residuals)**

Issue categories	Year	
	2012	2013
Government/Politics	28.0	22.8
	2.2	-2.2
Crime	5.6	9.5
	-2.7	2.7
Natural disasters/Accidents	6.4	7.2
	-0.5	0.5
Work/Unions	7.5	5.3
	1.7	-1.7
Business/Economy	13.4	8.9
	2.6	-2.6
Armed conflicts/Terrorism/Wars	5.1	6.1
	-0.8	0.8
Social problems	2.6	2.9
	-0.3	0.3
Health	3.0	2.0
	1.0	-1.0
Education	1.5	1.5
	0.0	0.0
Culture	10.3	10.7
	-0.2	0.2
Science	2.1	3.7
	-1.6	1.6
Environment	0.7	0.3
	1.0	-1.0
Society	3.6	4.8
	-1.1	1.1
Others	10.2	14.3
	-2.3	2.3

The second research question refers to the idea that the change of news editors may have affected the presence of viewpoint diversity. Hypothesis testing did not show any statistically significant differences ( $X^2=0.942$ ,  $df=1$ ,  $p\leq 0.332$ ) between the two samples, although there was a fall in the percentage of news items offering viewpoint diversity (from 50.7% in 2012 to 48% in 2013).

However, when considering viewpoint diversity in each of the issue categories, statistically significant differences between the two sample years were found in three of them (Table 3). While

the presence of viewpoint diversity in news about Work/Unions and Armed conflicts/Terrorism/Wars was lower, in the Society category it was higher.

**Table 3. Comparison of the presence of viewpoint diversity (% and adjusted standardised residuals)**

Issue categories	2012	2013
Work/Unions	67.4	44.4
	2.1	-2.1
Society	18.2	45.5
	-2.1	2.1
Armed conflicts/Terrorism/Wars	67.7	38.1
	2.5	-2.5

The third research question refers to the presence and diversity of news sources. Regarding the number of sources that explicitly appeared in the news, the analysis of adjusted standardised residuals in Table 4 shows statistically significant differences in the increase in news items without any identified source and in the decrease in news items with a single source. When considering the issue categories separately, the number of sources has particularly fallen in news about Work/Unions ( $X^2= 4.523$ ,  $df=1$ ,  $p\leq 0.033$ ; residuals: -2.1).

**Table 4. Source diversity (% and adjusted standardised residuals)**

Number of sources	2012	2013
Unidentified source	9.3	12.7
	-1.9	1.9
Single source	42.0	36.5
	2.0	-2.0
Two sources	30.0	28.1
	0.8	-0.8
Three or more sources	18.7	22.7
	-1.8	1.8

$X^2=8.582$ ,  $df=3$ ,  $p\leq 0.035$

Regarding the sources used, Table 5 lists the 35 source types based on the initial disaggregated coding. It should be noted that there were no major differences between the years except in a few specific cases. Firstly, there were nearly 50% fewer references to the Government as a news source,

which is probably connected with the decrease in news about government-related issues. Secondly, there was an increase in religious sources, though the explanation for this is that while the sample was being collected, Pope Benedict XVI resigned, so the results may have been affected by that event. Finally, the biggest increase occurred in the presence of citizens and civil-society groups as sources.

After cross-tabulating source types with issue categories and comparing the results for the two years, we found statistically differences in the Government/Politics ( $X^2= 56.884$ ,  $df=23$ ,  $p\leq 0.001$ ) and Society ( $X^2=26.163$   $df=11$ ,  $p\leq 0.006$ ) categories. In Government/Politics news, the analysis of adjusted standardised residuals showed that, as sources, there was a lower presence of members of the Government (-2.7), judicial agents (-1.9), people charged with corruption belonging to the social-democratic party *Partido Socialista Obrero Español* (PSOE) (-1.9) and other Spanish politicians (-1.9), and a higher presence of PP (+2.2) and American politicians (+2.1). In Society news, there was an increase in Church sources (+3.6) and a decrease in citizen sources (-2.2).

**Table 5. Sources (multiple-response cumulative %)**

Sources	2012	2013
Rajoy	2.9	1.1
Rubalcaba	2.2	1.2
Royal Household	0.9	1.4
State Institutions	0.3	1.9
Government	10.3	4.5
Politicians representing Spain's autonomous communities and local councils	5.7	5.2
PP	5.2	5.1
PSOE	5.1	3.4
Other parties with parliamentary representation	2.8	1.5
Judicial sources	6.6	5.3
Economy	4.7	6.4
State security forces	3.3	3.3
Churches/Religion	0.4	3.2
Unions	3.2	2.3
Journalists and media	2.2	4.6
Surveys	1.3	2.4
Experts	6.3	6.9
People charged in the Nóos case	0.3	0.6

People charged with corruption belonging to PP	0.8	0.3
People charged with corruption belonging to PSOE	0.9	0.1
Political representatives of the European Union	2.4	2.4
Political representatives of the European area	4.2	3.9
International organisations	0.0	1.6
Political representatives of South American countries	1.1	2.8
Political representatives of Asian countries	0.3	0.9
Political representatives of Middle Eastern countries	3.6	1.4
Citizens/Civil society	14.3	17.0
International terrorism	0.1	0.1
Delinquency	0.6	0.1
Cases relating to violence against children and adolescents	1.1	0.5
Art, culture and shows	4.8	6.5
Social networks	0.3	0.1
Other foreign politicians	0.6	1.1
American politicians	0.2	1.1
Other Spanish politicians	1.0	0.0
Total	537	599

As indicated in the methodology section, the journalistic role played by professionals (when oriented more towards neutral information or commentary) is also an indicator of internal pluralism (Hallin and Mancini, 2004). Furthermore, Kaid and Strömbäck (2006: 425-426) assert that “the objectivity and impartiality of news are important in media systems that are governed by internal pluralism and not so important for those which are governed by external pluralism.” In this respect, the fourth research question refers to the use of descriptive, interpretative or critical journalistic styles, and the tone (positive, negative or neutral) of news.

The data show that there was a fall in the number of descriptive-style news items between 2012 and 2013 (Table 6). It was also found that the percentage of positive-tone news items had increased and the percentage of neutral-tone news items had decreased. In interpretative-style news items, it should be noted that the use of a positive tone increased substantially (from 9.1% to 21.6%; residuals: 3.5), while neutral news items decreased (from 88.2% to 72.8%; residuals: -3.9).

When testing to see whether or not the general trend recurred in each issue category, it was found to do so in the use of journalistic styles; in other words, there were no differences between the issue

categories. Regarding the tone of news, the analysis of adjusted standardised residuals showed that the biggest difference referred to an increase in positive-tone news in the Economy category (from 4.9% to 21.3%, residuals: 3).

**Table 6. Journalistic style and tone of news (% and adjusted standardised residuals)**

<b>Journalistic styles</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2013</b>
Descriptive	60.3	54.4
	2.1	-2.1
Interpretative	30.7	33.9
	-1.2	1.2
Critical	9.0	11.7
	-1.6	1.6
<b>Tones</b>		
Negative	2.1	2.3
	-0.3	0.3
Positive	7.0	14.3
	-4.2	4.2
Neutral	90.8	83.3
	4.0	-4.0

#### 4. Discussion and conclusions

The main aim of this work was to determine whether or not the national public broadcasting policies implemented in Spain by the current PP Government had affected the internal pluralism of TVE's news content. As indicated, there was broad consensus among scholars and professionals that the reform promulgated in 2006 by the social-democratic Government (degovernmentalisation of management bodies and the creation of news councils) had been positive, and that the shift towards regovernmentalisation following the last change of government should be questioned.

In the four indicators contemplated (issue selection, viewpoint diversity, news source diversity and journalistic style), the content analysis results showed that changes had occurred between the 2012 and 2013 samples. It should be noted, however, that these changes were not uniform across the four variables, and that in certain cases the issue category was the element that marked a difference.

Regarding issue selection, in 2013, there was found to be a greater proliferation of banal content and a lower presence of hard news than before the 2012 broadcasting reform. This was clearly inconsistent with the serious recession that Spain had been experiencing, and with the intense

legislative activity that had been driven by the PP Government in the months and years covered by this study. The central hypothesis of agenda setting affirms that there is a correlation between the issues highlighted by the media and the issues that citizens regard as the most important or worrying. In keeping with that argument, the diversity of issues selected is a prerequisite to ensure that the public has a pluralistic and balanced perception of reality. In this respect, the results of our study showed that the importance given to issues had varied. For example, in the 2012 sample, Government / Politics and Business / Economy had occupied the top two positions (40.1% of the news), whereas in 2013, 37.1% of the news was split between Government/Politics and Others.

While no statistically significant differences were found in viewpoint diversity in the samples as a whole, some were observed in the coverage given to certain issues, with Work/Unions representing a particularly striking case in point. It was paradoxical to find fewer viewpoints in news on these issues at a time when a very tough and highly contested labour reform was being implemented. Regarding the same issue category (Work/Unions), a statistically significant reduction in the number of sources used was found between 2012 and 2013.

At the same time, an increase in the number of news items with unidentified sources was observed. These data are important because, in the Spanish case, the existence of a correlation between the number of sources used and viewpoint diversity has been identified (Humanes, Montero, de Dios, and López-Berini 2013). Therefore, if this trend were to become established, then internal pluralism would be severely affected.

Finally, in 2013, there was a lower presence (in all issue categories) of the descriptive journalistic style (more in keeping with internal pluralism of content) and a higher presence of the interpretative and critical styles. Of particular note was the increase in the positive tone of interpretative news items, particularly in relation to economic content, at a time when absolutely no signs of recovery were apparent, not even in the country's macroeconomic indicators.

It would seem evident, therefore, that the regovernmentalisation of RTVE's management bodies in 2012 and the ensuing changes of news editors had negative implications for TVE's news policy in general and for its newscast content pluralism in particular. As demonstrated, these implications ranged from content banalisation to the detriment of major current affairs issues (fewer viewpoints and sources in the coverage of labour-related news), to the prevalence of interpretative journalism, with a surprising increase in the positive tone of economy-related news.

If the continued condemnation by professionals (the new Government has not dared to abolish the public media's news councils) and the aforementioned striking loss of audience share are added to these content analysis results, then there can be no doubt that TVE's news offering has undoubtedly regressed since the change of government in 2011. This regression is very worrying, not only because it confirms the undoing of the encouraging 2006 reform, but also because it considerably weakens the internal pluralism of TVE's news content and, consequently, the external pluralism of the DTT news offering in Spain.

In short, what we have before us is a clear example of the strengthening of two of the distinctive features of Mediterranean media systems, according to the classification offered by Hallin and

Mancini (2004): governmental interference and weak articulation of professional organisations. While such organisations do exist, they are incapable of counteracting such interference, which has once again become established in RTVE.

The following electoral events in 2015 will be an excellent case study to verify if the trends outlined in this paper have been consolidated.

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Dates:

Start of the research: 2010

End of the research: 2013

## 5. Notes

(1) Council of Ministers. 2012. “Modificado el régimen de administración de la Corporación RTVE”. La Moncloa, 20 April.

<http://www.lamoncloa.gob.es/ConsejodeMinistros/Referencias/2012/refc20120420.htm#RTVE>

(2) <http://www.consejoinformativostve.es/comunicados/comunicados/75-grave-ataque-a-la-libertad-de-informacion.html>

(3) <http://www.consejoinformativostve.es/comunicados/comunicados/17-comunicados-cditve/89-informe-semanal-acoso-a-politicos.html>

(4) <http://www.consejoinformativostve.es/comunicados/comunicados/17-comunicados-cditve/91-el-cdi-pide-la-dimision-del-director-de-contenidos-de-tve.html>

(5) <http://assembly.coe.int/ASP/Doc/XrefViewPDF.asp?FileID=19474&Language=EN>

(6) <http://www.barloventocomunicacion.es/publicaciones.html>

(7) Adjusted standardised residuals greater than  $\pm 1.96$  indicate that there are more or fewer cases than expected under a null hypothesis at the 95% confidence level.

(8) News that could not be coded into any other category was included in this category. A characteristic feature of them is that they focus on banal events that are not given any follow-up coverage. Some examples are people who gatecrash celebrations, urban climbing in Russia or songs from the past.

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