

# POLLS, POLITICS AND PERESTROIKA: THE EMERGENCE OF POLITICAL OPINION POLLING IN CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE

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In advanced Capitalist Democracies, political opinion polls are usually seen as objective, reliable tools for determining the 'will of the people'. This article presents the results of a survey conducted throughout 1990, of the opinion polling community in 8 (formerly one-party) states of Central and Eastern Europe, and of Bulgaria in 1992. The survey was concerned with monitoring the changing status and role of polling in the context of political democratisation and political restructuring. The analysis sets out to consider the degree to which polling as an institutional process is dependent upon the political regime in a given state, and also the degree of 'democratisation' which exists there.

## Background

The opinion polling industry is well entrenched in advanced 'competitive' capitalist democracies. They are now an integral part of our political and social landscape and they are likely to become even more prominent in the future. In 1950 'The institute of the public opinion poll established itself to a degree hitherto unknown in British politics' (H.G. Nicholas, 1951, p.28). By the 1980s, this status was confirmed - the 1987 general election witnessed '...the most exhaustively polled election in British history' (D. Butler and D.A. Kavanagh, 1988, p.124). Indeed, it is claimed that 'by the beginning of the 1980s, polls were being conducted in virtually every Western-style democracy' (R.M. Worcester, 1987, p.S82).

However, in the former one-party states of Central and Eastern Europe, loosely defined here as 'Socialist Democracies', the history of opinion polling has been more volatile and unpredictable. According to the results of this survey, polling studies were conducted as early as 1919 in Czechoslovakia, 1936 in Hungary, 1958 in Poland, 1963 in Yugoslavia, 1965 throughout the (former) USSR, the 1960s in Bulgaria and Latvia, 1976 in Estonia, and the 1980s in Lithuania. Yet, the limited available evidence suggests that opinion polling in the region has had an uncertain and variable existence.

What follows is an analysis of opinion polling in these countries (the response details of which are provided in Table 1), which will attempt to demonstrate the dependence of public opinion research upon the character of the

incumbent political regime and ultimately the state of political 'democratisation' through:

- i) the changing priorities which the regime had (and now have) for public opinion research, and the perceived relevance of such information;
- ii) the changing emphasis on different methods which regimes felt appropriate in particular contexts;
- iii) the uses and functions which the regimes assign to the polling information;
- iv) the changing degree and level of state control of public opinion information, and over the institutions themselves.

Table 1: Response Matrix for the 1990 Survey of the Polling Community in Central and Eastern Europe

	No. pollsters contacted	No. pollsters responded	% response
Czechoslovakia	19	13	68
USSR	13	10	77
Poland	11	5	45
Bulgaria	7	6	85
Estonia	3	2	67
Hungary	7	2	29
Lithuania	2	2	100
Latvia	3	2	66
Yugoslavia	4	1	25
TOTAL	69	43	62

## The Development of Polling in European Socialist Democracies

Opinion polling in the former Socialist Democracies was closely related to the methodological preferences of the party hierarchies and this was very much dependent upon the degree of political democratisation. Thus, Gitelman (1977, p.2) commented that under Stalin 'The instruments by which public opinion was discovered (in the Soviet Union) included the secret police, the party apparatus ...letters to the mass media and "self-criticism"', whilst Worcester (1987, p.S82) observes that between '...1930 and the mid 1950s, the Soviet leadership tended to assume that party cadres, aided by KGB sources and informants, knew what needed to be known about the citizenry's needs, attitudes and preferences.' However, in the less authoritarian atmosphere of the 1970s, with discussion at least within the party, there was scope to debate the role of sociological research, but again only within the party, which continued to wield monopoly control over the means of communication. Here, there was intense discussion over the

appropriateness of two conflicting approaches to public opinion research: firstly, the tried and tested methods of Democratic Centralism, usually used to understand the will of the people, and advocated by the leading party ideologists - i.e. feedback through the party members, and the party organs; and secondly, a more Social Science orientated approach, favoured by Konstantin Chernenko, which demanded a more systematic study of public opinion.

In the present era, the enthusiasm for opinion polling research can be assessed in relation to a number of indicators from our survey results. Firstly we can look at the number of pollsters actually conducting research in each country (Table 2).

Country	Number of pollsters	Population (000's)*	No. Pollsters Per Mn Persons
Great Britain	10	57397	0.17
Czechoslovakia	30	15627	1.92
Hungary	18	10589	1.69
Yugoslavia	7	23758	0.29
Poland	15	37889	0.39
Soviet Union	105	283900	0.37
Estonia	10	1573**	6.36
Latvia	5	2681**	1.86
Lithuania	3	3690**	0.81
Bulgaria	10	9000***	1.11

\* European Data and Marketing Statistics, 1990  
 \*\* A. Roxborough, 1991, p.3  
 \*\*\* S. White, V. Gardner, G. Shopflin, T. Saich, 1990, p.2

These results suggest that there is substantial polling activity taking place in the region, particularly in comparison with the situation in Britain. It is also very volatile - one of the respondents suggested that it was impossible to provide a complete list of pollsters in Hungary, because just as new organisations appeared, others vanished. As we can see from the results, there is however a difference in terms of the numbers of pollsters operating per size of population. Of course more does not necessarily mean better - for instance, in Britain there are many polling organisations which claim to do both political and social research, but in reality conduct this work on an ad hoc and intermittent basis only. Nevertheless, this measure can be utilised to infer that polling is now relatively more manifest in Estonia, Czechoslovakia, Latvia, Hungary and Bulgaria than in any of the other countries in the region. In the case of Czechoslovakia, this corresponds with our initial assumptions, demonstrating a qualitative change from the Stalinist era in that country, where according to Welsh, (1981, p.5) polling was more constrained than in any of the other countries of the region.

The size of the operation can also illustrate the extent to which polling has developed roots within the region. As yet the organisations have small research teams and administrative back-ups (over half of those contacted employ less than ten persons for each: 58% of research staff, and 76% of administrative staff). We would of course expect this from our initial hypotheses which suggest that polling is only likely to materialize following the transition from single party to multi-party political systems, as is the case for those countries in the region. Similarly, the field-work teams are relatively small - about 56% employ less than 100 interviewers. This compares with the size of the interviewing teams employed by the British pollsters MORI (800), Gallup (450), and Harris (1000).

The sophistication of polling in the region can be assessed with reference to the services which are provided. Virtually all opinion polling organisations in the region (9 in 10) contacted provide survey and questionnaire design, conduct fieldwork, and calculate tabulations. Clearly then, the polling community are able to offer a comprehensive package, but what is particularly noteworthy is that so many of the respondents (70%) do multivariate analysis. This appears to be a fairly recent development, as according to Welsh (1981, p.8) it was a fairly unknown mode of data analysis outside of Yugoslavia, in the early 1980s.

#### The Use and Functions of Opinion Polls in European Socialist Democracies

Part of the explanation for the increased activity of opinion polling in these former one-party European Socialist Democracies, can be identified in the changing roles and functions, which the Government assigns to them. We can compare these to the uses which sponsors in Western capitalist democracies have for them, and the 'functions' (deliberate or unintended) which it is alleged they take on.

Polling in the West, as commissioned by the media, is used to boost the circulation of newspapers, ultimately to increase profits: in this way they inform the citizenry of what (the polls measure) is public opinion regarding political issues and partisan preferences. For other sponsors, not just politicians and parties, but also pressure groups who seek to influence government policy, polls can be used to identify which issues, and which methods of presentation, will be favourably received by the public: in this way they are also employed to manipulate public opinion, and test the effectiveness of propaganda in this process. Polls also assist in both articulating the policy demands that citizens have and in providing feed-back in terms of how well policy-makers (and parties) are performing.

In the former 'pre-Perestroika/Glasnost' one party Socialist Democracies, the operational sphere of the opinion polls was more narrowly defined. The sponsors - government officials - employed public opinion research to:

- i. Ascertain popular views on various issues and determine what problems concern their citizens;

- ii. Determine the effectiveness of party propaganda, ideological work and the mass media;
- iii. Detect changes in public opinion and anticipate how various groups will respond to policy change' (R.M. Worcester, 1987, p.S84).

However, in the Soviet Union in the post 1985 Perestroika/Glasnost era of gradual democratisation, and in the other countries of the region in the post-revolution rapid democratization period, the functions assigned to polls by their sponsors have increased. Firstly, because they were perceived as assisting democratisation itself. Valery Korobeinikov, an opinion pollster based in the former Soviet Union has observed that the spirit of public opinion research was legally written into the Soviet constitution (1977) which stated that the extension of socialist democracy is closely connected with '...greater openness and publicity, and constant responsiveness to public opinion' (1988, p.160).

Secondly, in a more concrete sense, polls assisted politicians by identifying public attitudes to reform; they provided feedback from citizens in relation to government plans, and therefore assisted policy-formation and implementation. On political reform, public opinion polls were conducted to help clarify voters' attitudes to innovations in the electoral system (particularly the secret ballot) and the nomination of party candidates (V. Korobeinikov, 1988, pp.161-162). Our survey results confirm these developments in polling: over 7 in 10 of the indigenous pollsters believe that their polls do inform the government and their other clients, and nearly a third believe that public opinion polls influence government policy.

Thirdly, at least in the Soviet Union, Korobeinikov argued that polls had been used by the ruling party '...to improve the work of the various Party Committees'. Thus two republic-wide polls were conducted in Georgia in late 1986 where 'Respondents were given the opportunity to evaluate the activities of all governing bodies in the republic ...[and to] indicate problems caused by excessive bureaucracy, obsolete regulations, 'formalism' and by cadre policies simply seen as incorrect' (1988, p.161).

Other functions identified for polling, include informing the public (cited by 33 of the 43 pollsters surveyed), and measuring the voting alignments and political issue-preferences of the new electorate in the context of multi-party political democratisation. However, according to our survey, polls appear to have lost their usefulness in terms of enabling governments to manipulate public opinion (according to the pollsters anyway) - just 3 of the pollsters in the region identified this a function of opinion polls. Finally our results demonstrate that in the transition from single to multi-party political systems, the role and functions of polling are extended, and actually take on new functions not apparent in western capitalist democracies - measuring the effectiveness of government and other political structures, and helping to clarify the issues of concern of the people.

### The Decline of Communist Control Over Opinion Polls

The general expansion of opinion polls in the region has occurred also as a response to changing demand. In the pre-Perestroika/Glasnost era, the state exercised monopoly control over the means of political communication (particularly the limited polling institutions) and therefore the output (by defining the scope of issues surveyed and published).

However, with the burgeoning effects of Perestroika and Glasnost, the predominance of the state in the field of public opinion research is fracturing. Table 3 shows that in terms of 'demand', new clients are becoming increasingly active in sponsoring polls. What represents probably the biggest break with the past is the rate of usage by 'Other' clients, particularly private (presumably Capitalist) firms, marketing agencies and foreign agencies.

	Past 12 Months (%)	Ever (%)
Political Parties	51	12
The Government	65	7
Media Organisations	61	9
Academic Institutions	61	9
Pressure Groups	23	14
Others (Parliament, President's Office, Municipal Organisations, Trade Unions, Private Firms, Marketing Agencies, Foreign Agencies)	33	2

The polling community also have more 'freedom' to survey issues formerly restricted by party functionaries and state officials. Previously, polling in Czechoslovakia was restricted to 'topics of relatively low sensitivity', in an attempt to keep its major policies beyond the reach of popular criticism and particularly dissident elements (see G. Klein and J. Krejci, 1981, p.204). Ward suggests that the circumstances surrounding the party's cautious approach in Poland to politically sensitive issues, stemmed from its experience of the labour unrest in 1976, (1981, p.5), whilst Woodward, sites the party's concern that it should not allow Yugoslavia to return to the uncontrollable consequences of the extensive freedom of speech of the 1960s (1981, p.82).

Our results suggest that the political regimes which currently exist in the countries of the region have adopted a more relaxed approach to the question of polling censorship - 9 out of 10 respondents claiming to be free from government restrictions over which issues to poll. Meanwhile the range of issues polled is also now relatively comprehensive. Political issues are now surveyed at least quarterly by 70% of our respondent's, but they also conduct surveys at least as frequently on issues in marketing (42%), housing (14%), education (14%), the environment (12%), and health (7%).

In the current climate 9 out of 10 of the respondents are able to publish their polls - a third very often, and over half fairly often. This represents a significant development in openness, bearing in mind that previous output was released only to a restricted clientele - the ministries and other institutions of the state.

As a consequence of these developments, our survey indicates that three quarters of the pollsters questioned believed their industry had at least the same degree of political independence as their counterparts in Western capitalist democracies. Our survey suggests that nearly half of the polling organisations currently operating are not 100% state-owned, and almost one in three are private firms. The impact of the general processes of democratisation in this shift away from state involvement, is shown in Table 4.

### The Role and Impact of Western Political Science

Our final analysis of the development of opinion polling in these former one-party states is concerned to identify:

- i) whether the methods adopted are the methods of western political science;
- ii) the problems posed for and the limitations of the methods and techniques employed in the context of increasing shifts and complexities in the economic, social, political and cultural environment.

Is opinion polling in the region an imported 'hybrid' of Western political science? The evidence suggested from our survey is vague. Eleven of the respondents underwent an element of their occupational training in the West (with four taking part in further training in other former European Socialist countries), whilst six had spent part of their academic time at Western institutions. Nevertheless, a large majority of respondents (62%) had at least a fair amount of knowledge of polling in western democracies, and a quarter claimed a lot of knowledge.

However, it is clear that Western political science institutionalised in the form of opinion poll companies, is expanding its sphere of influence, and penetrating the region. In the first national post-revolution elections, the activity of the western polling community was noticeable in Czechoslovakia, Romania and East Germany. They have also conducted polls in the Soviet Union and Hungary, as partners with the indigenous institutions. Already in Britain, Gallup have incorporated the Hungarian 'Mareco' into their international organisation, and the Bulgarian 'Balkan British Social Surveys'. At the time of writing, they are also in negotiations with pollsters in Russia, Lithuania, Czechoslovakia and Poland, and have an affiliate in Eastern Germany, 'ZUMA'.

MAI Information East Europe (linked to NOP) carry out their operations in the region by sub-contracting fieldwork to indigenous firms, and are soon to open their own offices in Czechoslovakia. It can only be a matter of time before other British firms form partnerships with other pollsters

operating in the region. Our survey results suggest that the indigenous pollsters will most likely respond positively to such developments, lagging behind their western counterparts in terms of 'professionalism' (44%), experience (67%), resources (81%) and quality of service (44%). The consensus is that in general, polling in Eastern and Central Europe is a long way off achieving its full potential: 7 out of 10 respondents felt that general sampling techniques need improving, half quoted the interview process, over a third are concerned with the question-wording, and nearly 65% with the data analysis.

### The Art and Science of Polling

Table 5 demonstrates that most countries surveyed adopt random sampling methods, although in some countries (notably Czechoslovakia, and Estonia), quota sampling is more popular than random sampling, and it is likely that this popularity might spread to the other former Communist countries in the future. This can be attributed to a number of factors:

- i. Whilst random sampling is seen as scientifically superior to quota sampling, the latter, because of its relative organisational and logistical simplicity, is quicker and cheaper than the former;
- ii. There is a negative trade-off when employing random samples in that while they are often required by foreign clients, there emerge response problems amongst certain minority groups as Czechoslovak gypsies which may be included within a random sample, but which live in areas which could be defined as 'No-Go areas' for the field-workers;
- iii. Lack of available up-to-date sampling frames. In Hungary, for instance, registration based on the national census was over 10 years out of date by October 1991. In Czechoslovakia, the central register of addresses available for random samples is inaccurate in 40% of cases (M. Hoscalet, 1991). To compensate for a similar problem in Poland, the state-owned polling organisation CBOS uses a substitute strategy in the form of a 'random route' sample, where at each address, the interviewer selects a person in a targeted household according to a particular random procedure, such as which resident had their birthday most recently (P. Kwiatkowski, 1991).
- iv. The re-emergence of cleavages in the post-1989 Revolution period (class, ethnicity, religion, locality etc.) is steering the pollsters toward considering the use of quota samples, in order to 'catch' these 'new' dimensions of change in the quotas set (J. Herzmann, 1991).

Telephone interviewing is not used at all by half of the pollsters in the region, and of those who do use this method, virtually all (95%) use it less than 40% of the time. However, the take-up rate in the former Soviet Union is more positive: there, 6 of the 10 respondents utilise telephones at least sometimes in the interview process. However, this might be more a necessity than choice, due

**Table 4: The Impact of 'Democratisation' on the Ownership Status of Polls in Central and Eastern Europe**

Year	State owned 100%	Part state/private	Private owned	Other	Political era
1919	C				Pre Perestroika/ Glasnost
1937	C				
1944	C				
1958	P				
1963				Y	
1965	S				
1966	C				
1968	S				
1969		H			
1971	P				
1972	C				
1975	La				
1976			E		
1983	P				
1986	C				Perestroika/ Glasnost
1987	S				
1988	S	Li	H P		
1989	CS	Li	S La	S	Post Revolution
1990	C		C C P E		

Key: S Soviet Union Y Yugoslavia C Czechoslovakia  
Li Lithuania P Poland La Latvia H Hungary E Estonia

to its huge geographic expanse, which makes face-to-face interviewing very problematic. This latter point may help to explain the fact that 60% of the pollsters there conduct postal surveys (although five out of these six respondents use them in less than 20% of their polls - only one polling agency uses postal surveys in all their polls). Generally however, this method is not being utilised by the pollsters in the region - 4 in 10 conducting no postal surveys at all. Meanwhile, qualitative research, in the form of group discussions are not widely used - over 83% of the survey had conducted 10 or less such discussions in the previous 12 months.

The context within which pollsters conduct their operations is often complex, providing a series of methodological and technical problems. Our results suggest that the major problems are concerned with the interview process itself: face-to-face interviewing was mentioned on seven occasions, telephone interviewing (6), and postal surveys (1). This of course is a fundamental issue for pollsters, and was mentioned by (British) Gallup for all the countries in the region which they poll.

These communication problems are obviously associated with various other problems which were cited. Firstly in terms of infrastructure, it was reported that the resources (particularly financial), facilities (transport) and technology (such as telecommunications/fax-machines) are not yet adequately advanced for intensive opinion polling. Secondly, respondents identified demographic issues, suggesting that the citizenry, and particularly the new 'electorate' is too heterogenous to sample, with little sustainable social identification, and providing logistical problems associated with language and culture. Thirdly, geography, where the physical size of territories means that the mechanics of actually doing a set number of interviews in situations where the population is widely spread, is itself difficult for individual field-workers. This is most pronounced in the Soviet Union, where the population density (12.8 persons per Km<sup>2</sup>) compares very badly for the pollsters with the other countries of the region, and more especially with Britain where it is 233.3 per Km<sup>2</sup> (European Marketing and Data Statistics, 1990). This field-work problem is compounded by deteriorating regional and cultural relations within national boundaries, which seem to be a feature of post-Perestroika/Glasnost social systems - the obvious emergence of polling 'No-Go' zones, which are too dangerous for interviewers to work (throughout the former Soviet Union, the Yugoslav Republics?).

With the pluralisation of the party systems, the standard 'If there was a general election tomorrow, which party would you vote for?' question takes on a new political meaning, with very real implications for the pollsters. Firstly of course the emergence of new political parties, and the ending of the Communist Parties' political hegemony provide an array of potential homes for the new electorate. The Polish example provides a useful illustration where, by the end of 1989 '...about 30-35 political parties, clubs and movements have emerged. They clung to all possible political ideologies and traditions including anarchism, the green movement and a Stalinist-style communism' (P. Kwiatkowski, 1989, p.14). The ability therefore of the pollsters to trace voting alignments, especially in election periods, is made more arduous by these political developments.

Citizens often find it difficult to differentiate their preferred party from other parties because of the similarity of party names. Hence it is not surprising that in Czechoslovakia in 1991, interviewers complained that respondents often got confused when asked to choose their favourite party from a list which included (amongst others) the Civic Democratic Party, the Civic Democratic Alliance, and Civic Movement (J. Herzmann, 1991).

The unwillingness of the public to participate in polls was also cited as a major obstacle in providing accurate measures of the public's issue-priorities, political opinions, and party preferences, by our respondents. This fear of personal expression was still evident during the general election there in March 1990, when *The Guardian* reported that 'Voters who are used to keeping their opinions to themselves after living in a Communist state might be

**Table 5: Most Frequent Interview Method Utilised By Pollsters Throughout Central And Eastern Europe**

Country	Proportion of pollsters utilising face-to-face interviews primarily	Proportion of pollsters utilising telephone interviews primarily	Proportion of pollsters utilising mail interviews primarily
Bulgaria	✓ 5/6		1/6
Czechoslovakia	✓ 11/13		2/13
Estonia	✓ 2/2		
Lithuania	✓ 3/3		
Poland	✓ 5/5		
USSR	✓ 6/10	1/10	1/10
Yugoslavia	✓ 1/1		
Hungary	✓ 2/2		
Latvia			✓ 1/1

\* Most Frequently is defined here as utilisation of the method in over 50% of cases  
KEY: ✓ Most common interviewing method

reluctant to talk freely to the pollsters' (Reuter, 1990, p.14). There is no doubt however that the situation was far more acute under the old regimes, and that there are historical precedents which suggest that in periods of limited political democratisation, the publics' willingness to respond does improve. Thus in 1968-69, one of the ways that Czechoslovakian citizens felt they could influence the pace and direction of reform was through participating in polls: 'Prior to April 1968 ...a great number of respondents were inhibited in talking freely. Suddenly in April ...the pollsters noted a genuine lack of fear on the part of the respondents and a willingness to answer all questions' (B. Bede, 1972, p.vii). Supporting this idea, Gitelman observed '...the universal experience has been that following a period of 'acculturation' to opinion research, East European publics respond very favourably' (Z.Y. Gitelman, 1977, p.11). Indeed according to our survey, although there are major problems involved in organising face-to-face interviews (as cited above), when they do take place, the refusal rate is acceptable - 28 of the 43 respondents reported it as 10% or less. Nevertheless, a worrying development for the opinion polling industry concerns an observable sense of alienation which citizens are experiencing from political life, fuelled by the failure of the new political regimes to solve immediate economic and social problems. Consequently, the initial euphoria which greeted the collapse of communist rule throughout the region, and which could be measured by the high levels of public participation in opinion polls in the way that Gitelman suggested, has been replaced by scepticism and apathy, and importantly for the pollsters, a corresponding increase in the rate of refusals of up to 20% since this survey was completed (A. Somogyi, 1991).

Finally, according to Kwiatkowski (1989), Noelle-Neumann's spiral of silence theory may be particularly relevant to the countries of the region. Here it is alleged that the media create a climate of opinion which encourages some to express their shared, popular beliefs, and others whose opinions do not correspond with the perceived majority to adopt a more reserved attitude when expressing their opinions in public. In Poland during the communist era, '...the spiral of silence acted in favour of the Communist leadership. Interviewers were often perceived as official persons and during polls many of the people adjusted their opinions to the official standpoint propagated by the media ...the results overestimated support for the party and the government ...In the present situation the spiral of silence may be favourable to the government and to Solidarity' (1989, p.17).

### Conclusions

In the post-revolution period since 1989, there has been a significant growth in the development of opinion polling in those countries of Central and Eastern Europe surveyed. The results also suggest a confirmation of the initial formulation(s) that polling is largely dependent on the nature of the political regime, and the level of political democratisation.

However, the current social and political environment of the region is particularly volatile, and subsequently difficult for the pollsters to assess. Firstly, the publics which have emerged are numerous, heterogenous and undefined. There are no obvious characteristics which tie these groups to the political parties or help to shape stable political priorities and orientations, which the pollsters could otherwise simply monitor and estimate over time.

The volatility which emerges through this is compounded by the restructuring of the political landscape and its parameters. The growth of pluralistic political systems has snowballed (at least in Poland and Czechoslovakia) into a 'party overload' system, which is characterised by a high level of party replacement, and an ongoing process of party coalition and/or fragmentation. Allied to these problems is the general absence of any coherent programmes or political ideologies put forward by the majority of the parties, which results ultimately in a failure both to develop political identities and to appeal to specific groups of the electorate. Consequently, the parties are unable to form political bases amongst the public, and their support tends to come from an amorphous mass of the citizenry, rather than any clearly identifiable group(s). This lack of any identifiable party/voter relationship which emerges from the combined impact of these situations, is likely to create problems for the pollsters in their efforts to monitor the development of the unfolding party system, and to estimate the likely share of party support in elections (J. Herzmann, 1991, A. Somogyi, 1991).

The tasks of the pollsters throughout the region are likely to be made all the more arduous by the potential decline in the publics' participation in opinion polls (particularly those

covering political issues), caused by a pervading sense of alienation which people in the region feel from political life.

It also appears that there are many methodological issues facing the pollsters, which may impose limitations on the nascent industry. These include:

- i. A lack of available accurate sampling frames for random samples in most of the countries of the region;
- ii. A common absence of appropriate infrastructure for polling (resources, facilities and technology). In particular, both the unequal distribution of, and the low levels of telephone penetration throughout the region make alternatives to face-to-face interviewing unfeasible and limit the choice for pollsters, where such alternatives might otherwise be more appropriate;
- iii. The (re-)emergence of national and territorial identities, and a corresponding growth of cultural pluralism, which may necessitate the need for pollsters to consider linguistic and behavioural issues in the interviewing process;
- iv. The deterioration of regional and cultural relations, and the development of 'No-Go' zones for interviewers.

According to these conclusions, opinion polling will have to undergo rigorous reassessment if it is to assert itself as a democratising force in these new states, and contribute to an understanding of the electoral processes currently taking shape in the countries comprising the former Central and East European Socialist Democracies.

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