

JRP THIRD WAVE

PREPARATION FOR THE CONTENT ANALYSIS

In preparation for the content analysis, several sequential stages must be implemented: (a) each national team must select the news media outlets to be included in the study; (b) the sampling units within each outlet must be determined; (c) since the analyses across all countries will be conducted simultaneously—during the same two constructed weeks in 2026—the specific dates must be set; and (d) the unit of analysis must be defined, specifying which individual items will be analyzed.

This document is designed to deal primarily with the choice of media outlets, the sample units, and the news to be analyzed, but brief references to the other issues are also presented and will be developed at later stages.

Selection of News Media Outlets

Each national team will select two to three news media outlets per platform – television, radio, newspapers and online news websites – taking into account the following general criteria:

- In general, the media outlets should be independent of each other, that is, no two outlets should belong to the same organization. Also, in order to avoid potential overlap in contents, the online news websites will *not* be those of the selected newspapers or television and radio stations. However, there may be exception to this rule. In cases where multiple outlets belonging to the same organization are important within the media environment, more than one may be included if most of their content is distinct. Some countries may have public and commercial radio and television broadcasts that are part of the same organization; in this case, both radio and television should be represented.
- Regarding online news, although preference should be given to “net-native” media, in some countries they are not well developed and online news is dominated by websites of established media organizations; if that is the case, the sample should include both types.
- Preference should be given to outlets that are national in scope (in contrast with “local” or “regional” scope). Indeed, in most countries the dominant media (mainly broadcast) are national in scope. Nevertheless, in some countries regional and local outlets are as influential as national media, particularly in decentralized systems or large territories. If relevant, the sample should aim to include both types. Outlets based outside the country

can be included if they target audiences within your country and you consider them a significant part of the media system. This would not, however, include foreign media (e.g. *The Guardian*, for the U.S. market) or transnational media (e.g. Al Jazeera, outside of Qatar).

- The outlets must be among the most popular (read, seen, or listened to) in their class, based on ratings or similar parameters.

Since the structure and format of media systems differ in many respects across the countries, such as with regards to size, media audience orientation (popular vs. elite), media ownership, media political leaning, and multiple languages, the selected outlets should represent as best as possible the diversity of the country's media system. This leads to three relevant considerations:

- The number of media outlets that a country must include in order to represent the variation of its media system may vary from country to country (between two to three per type).
- If most of the critical characteristics of the media outlets are constant in your media systems, you will need fewer outlets per platform. In other words, greater heterogeneity in your media system will lead you to include more outlets, and vice versa.
- Exceptions to the general criteria can be made when needed.

Some examples may be helpful to clarify potential variations among countries leading to decisions that need to be taken:

- While popular-oriented news outlets (tabloid newspapers, for example) are not present in some countries, they are highly prevalent in other countries, so if they are a significant part of the media system they should be included in the study.
- In some countries all media are private/commercial; in other countries there is a mix between private and public (mostly broadcast) media; while in still other countries all media may be public or state-owned. The sample of outlets should include all relevant types.
- In multilingual countries, in which language is an important feature of the media system, an attempt should be made to include media outlets that reflect all dominant languages.

- In countries in which media outlets are organs of political organizations, care should be taken to include outlets with different political orientations.

Selection of Sampling Units

After selecting the media outlets, we need to determine which specific **sampling units** will be dealt with in each outlet. Specific criteria will be used in making the decision for each medium/platform.

For **television**, the sampling units will be the *most heavily viewed* newscasts within each selected outlet. Usually, the most viewed TV news program is the evening newscast but this may not be the case for all countries. It may also vary by day of the week (see below). It is important to determine whether the newscasts can be retrieved at a later date from the relevant online repository; if not, they will be recorded off-air.

For **radio**, the sampling units will be the most-listened-to news programs within each selected outlet. Typically, the most popular radio news program airs early in the morning, but this may vary across countries. In some cases, the relevant news broadcast (or bulletin) is brief, lasting only a few minutes, while in others, it may last a full hour or even several hours. If the broadcast lasts an hour or longer, coding a one-hour segment is sufficient. In the case of short radio news bulletins, multiple broadcasts should be collected to reach at least 30 minutes of news coverage. Please collect content from newscasts at the same hours each day. Example: if the newscast is 5-minute long and it is broadcast every hour, you need to collect the content of at least 6 newscasts. Please use a specific schedule of collecting the content, e.g., at 10:00, 12:00, 14:00, 18:00, and 21:00 each day. It is also important to determine whether the broadcasts can be retrieved from the relevant online repository; if not, they must be recorded off-air.

For **Newspapers**, the sampling units will be the specific full issues of the selected newspapers published on the relevant dates. If it is possible to download the print edition from websites, this should be done. Alternatively, copies of the issues may be purchased and kept on file.

For **Online** news media, the sampling unit will be the homepage of the selected news websites including all posts that fit the selection criteria and were posted on the sample dates. In very specific cases, where smaller websites post few articles, teams may decide to include posts from earlier dates to allow a sufficient sample size for analysis. Sampled posts should not,

however, duplicate posts included from earlier sample dates.

The homepages of the websites, and the respective news stories, should be captured in the late afternoon or evening, when most of the day's news has been posted.

Selection of Sample Days

In designing the sample of the days that we will include in the study, we will use the same effective strategy as in the previous waves of the JRP Project.

Because daily and monthly variations are important factors to consider when conducting a news content analysis, we will divide the year 2026 into two 6 month periods: January-June, and July-December. For each six-month period we will create a constructed week, that is, stratified-systematic samples.

Accordingly, for each of the two 6-month periods, we will randomly select starting dates on a Monday in January and a Monday in July. Then, using 3-4 week skip intervals we will select each of the subsequent six days: a Tuesday, a Wednesday, a Thursday, a Friday, a Saturday, and a Sunday. We will thus have 7 days in each 6-month period, for a total sample of 14 days during the year.

In some countries there is no news provided by some outlets on weekends or the format and/or time slots may differ from weekdays. In fact, the main day off (part of the weekend) varies between Sundays, Saturdays and Fridays. Thus, in some countries there may be no newspaper published or no news program on television and/or radio on weekends or part thereof. These situations will be considered as “missing data.” If, however, only the time of a television and/or radio news program is shifted (e.g., in the case of special events) then the newscast should be coded in the actual time slot.

Since all countries will be analyzing the same days, we will send you the list of the specific dates at some point in the near future.

News to be analyzed

Once we've recorded the news of the first day (sometime in January 2026) from all outlets, we can begin coding. This will be done using our specially created and validated Codebook. Details of the codebook will be discussed in our training sessions in the coming months.

The **unit of analysis** to be coded for all outlets and sampling units will be the *news item*.

A news item will be conceptualized as a set of contiguous verbal and, if relevant, also audio and/or visual elements that refer to the same event/issue/person. The same definition for the unit of analysis will be used for all news outlets.

For each of the selected issues/editions/news programs of newspapers, television, radio, and online news websites, all current affairs news are coded. Specifically, the following topics are coded: government/legislatures, campaigns/elections/politics, economy and business, police and crime, court, defense/military/national security, war and conflict, education, health, environment, energy, transportation, housing, accidents and natural disasters, religion and churches, labor and employment, demonstration and protests, social issues, science and technology, and media and communication. "Soft news," including sports, arts/culture/entertainment, lifestyle, travel, leisure, fashion and the like are not coded. However, in some cases where these topics are treated as current affairs, they may be coded. Examples might include stories like a bribery scandal at FIFA, conflicts over charges of doping in international sports, issues of racial representation in art and entertainment, or controversies over the ownership of art objects. In general, where these stories appear in special sections or rubrics they will not be coded. If they appear as part of the general news, coders will have to determine whether they can be considered as "current affairs" coverage.

Of course, an event, issue, etc., may be reported by the media in more than one news item on a given day. In such cases, both (or more) items would be considered as separate items and will be coded separately.

For all media outlets the following will *not* be coded: editorials, opinions, weather forecasts, horoscopes, movie (or other cultural) reviews, and puzzles. Furthermore, we will not code supplements/magazines/special features programs, published or broadcast by any media outlets. Headlines on newspaper front pages, where the story does not appear with them, and at the beginning of TV and radio news broadcasts will also not be coded *per se*, but in the Codebook there will be a reference as to whether or not there was a front-page headline for the item.

In the case of online media, we will code items in the above topic categories that appear on the extended home page by clicking on, and thereby opening, each of the relevant items. Items that have video (or audio) clips embedded in the item will also be coded.

The coding of all the items will be carried out by coders trained by the PIs in their

respective countries. In order to reduce bias, the corpus of the news items in each country should be divided randomly among coders (thus no coder should code an entire outlet by herself/himself). Ideally, each national team should have between two to four coders to establish good inter-coder reliability.

Before starting the coder training process, PIs in each country will be requested clarify all their uncertainties with the General Coordinator of the Project or a member of the Executive Committee. If necessary, the General Coordinator will travel to work with the countries that need help in the training process.

Before starting with the actual coding, we will conduct pretests within and across countries in order to ensure comparable interpretations of the Codebook. This process will be explained in due course.