

Vitosha Research / Sociological Program

The Sociological Program started operating shortly after the establishment of CSD. In 1990, it conducted the first independent pre- and post-election surveys after the democratic changes in Bulgaria. This was an important contribution to democratic institution building and to fostering public awareness of the evolving new political and economic system. Vitosha Research was launched at the end of 1994 as a spin-off from the Sociological Program of CSD, in order to deepen its concentration in the field of market research.

The first surveys of the Sociological Program provided the foundation for building up an effective, professional research unit. Vitosha Research now works on contractual basis, covering a wide range of activities: monitoring privatization and economic behavior, gauging political attitudes, determining value orientations, conducting market research, media and audience research, measuring the effectiveness of advertising, and others.

1991-1994 Program Highlights:

- Organized a national interviewer network consisting of approximately 350 interviewers. It is regionally based and consists of 28 regional groups (100 interviewers in Sofia and 250 in all county centers).
- Conducted 50 quantitative national sample surveys (public opinion, social, marketing and audience research) and 20 qualitative surveys. The basic survey methods employed included face-to-face interviews, telephone interviews, focus group discussions, omnibus surveys, and a computer-based perception analyzer system (quick-tally) for assessment of radio and TV programming, and advertising.
- Organized an international seminar on survey methodology and organization in Sandanski, southern Bulgaria, in August 1992. The seminar was attended by pollsters from Hungary, Poland, Russia, Romania, and Bulgaria. The lecturers included Dr. Peter Mohler, Director of ZUMA, Mannheim, Dr. Mary McIntosh, Chief of the European Branch of USIA Office of Research, and leading US pollsters, Nancy Belden and Gary Lawrence.
- Completed a research project, At-risk Groups and Social Problems in Bulgaria, in August - September 1994, which was part of a package of surveys commissioned by the World Bank. The survey design employed several research techniques, including a quantitative survey of clients of Social Assistance Offices, focus group discussions with experts and representatives of risk groups and in-depth interviews with selected representatives of high-risk groups. The

analytical report of survey findings was presented at a seminar organized by the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare and CSD.

- Established good working relations and research cooperation with institutions including the BBC World Service, USIA Office of Research, Open Media Research Institute, Audience and Opinion Research Department (USA, Washington), the World Bank, Worldnet TV (USA), International Social Survey Program, and Gallup Hungary, to name but a few.

The activities of Vitosha Research in 1995 were aimed primarily at:

- Conducting market research and consultancy projects;
- Providing methodological and technical support to the other CSD projects;
- Preparing a series of analytic reports on economic reforms, mass privatization, and political values during the transition;
- Developing the skills of the research staff in order to further improve the infrastructural aspects of research: the national interviewer network, the survey information database, and the employment of new research techniques.

I. Research Projects

The research projects conducted in 1995 could be divided in two categories: social and opinion research, and market research.

Social and Opinion Research

Four quantitative research projects were conducted in 1995. Two of them were based on national representative samples. A total of 4000 face-to-face interviews were conducted by the

national interviewer network of Vitosha Research. The basic topics covered were:

- Public opinion about politics and the economy;
- Potential electoral behavior in the 1995 local elections;
- Media survey;
- Value system of the youth population.

Four qualitative research projects were completed in 1995. A total of eight focus groups involving 80 participants were conducted in Sofia, Burgas, and Dobrich, covering the following topics:

- Problems of Bulgaria's Foreign and Security Policy;
- Electoral Attitudes Before the Local Elections;
- Efficiency of the Social Security System in Bulgaria;
- The Value System and Political Affiliations of Bulgarian Society: 1990-1995.

Social and opinion research projects conducted by Vitosha Research in 1995 were commissioned by the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare, the European Branch of USIA Office of Research and Media Reaction, the Friedrich

Naumann Foundation, RFE/RL Research Institute, and the Committee of Youth at the Council of Ministers.

Market Research

Most market research projects included both quantitative and qualitative research. A total of 6000 face-to-face interviews and six focus group discussions were conducted. The research fields included:

- Buying and Consumer Behavior of Consumers of Home Electronic Appliances;
- Survey of the Electronic Appliances Shops in Sofia;
- The Milk Market in Bulgaria;
- Customers of Fast Food Shops in Sofia;

- Alcoholic Drinks Consumption.

The market research projects were commissioned directly, or through Bulgarian representatives, by Tetrapack, KFC, and Phillips, among others.

II. Conference

A conference, *At-Risk Groups and the Challenges to Social Policy*, was held jointly with the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare. Participants included experts and researchers in the field of social security and social welfare. An analytical paper based on the results of the survey *At-Risk Groups and Social Problems in Bulgaria*, conducted in the previous year, was provided to participants of the conference.